SOVIET LITERATURE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

VALENTIN KATAYEV

FOREIGN LANGUAGES
PUBLISHING HOUSE
Moscow

OCR: HTTP://HOME.FREEUK.COM/RUSSICA2/

VALENTIN KATAYEV

THE COTTAGE IN THE STEPPE

a novel

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY
FAINNA SOLASKO AND EVE MANNING

DESIGNED BY D. BISTI

CONTENTS

Death of Tolstoi
Skeleton
What Is a Red?
A Heavy Blow
Requiem
The Resignation
An Old Friend
Gavrik's Dream
A Jar of Jam
Mr. Faig
The Sailor's Outfit
Departure
The Letter
On Board
Istanbul
Chicken Broth
The Acropolis
The New Hat
The Mediterranean
Messina
Pliny the Younger
Naples and the Neapolitans
Alexei Maximovich
Vesuvius
A Cinder
The Eternal City
On the Shores of Lake Geneva
Emigres and Tourists
Love at First Eight
A Storm in the Mountains
The Home-Coming
Precious Stones
Sunday
The Kite From a Shop
The Bad Mark
Auntie's New Idea
The Old Woman
Workers of the World, Unite!
The New Home
Snowdrops
The Lena Massacre
The First Issue of the *Pravda*
The Cottage in .the Steppe
The Death of Warden
The Widow with a Child
The Secret Note
The Rendezvous

Caesar's Commentaries
Queen of the Market
Friends in Need
Don't Kick a Man When He's Down!
Terenty Semyonovich
Glow-Worms
Moustache
The Sail
At the Camp-Fire
Stars

DEATH OF TOLSTOI

Gusts of wind from the sea brought rain and tore the umbrellas from people's hands. The streets were shrouded in the grey half-light, and Petya's heart felt just as dark and dreary as the morning.

Even before he reached the familiar corner he saw a small crowd gathered around the news-stand. Stacks of overdue papers had just been dropped off and were being snatched up eagerly. The unfolded pages fluttered in the wind and were instantly spotted by the rain. Some of the men in the crowd removed their hats, and a woman sobbed loudly, dabbing a handkerchief at her eyes and nose.

"So he is dead," Petya thought. He was near enough now to see the wide black mourning border around the pages and a dark portrait of Lev Tolstoi with his familiar white beard.

Petya was thirteen and, like all young boys, he was terrified by thoughts of death. Whenever someone he knew died, Petya's heart would be gripped by fear and he would recover slowly as after a serious illness. Now, however, his fear of death was of an entirely different mature. Tolstoi had not been an acquaintance of theirs. Petya could not conceive of the great man as living the life of an ordinary mortal. Lev Tolstoi was a famous writer, just like Pushkin, Gogol, or Turgenev. In the boy's imagination he was a phenomenon, not a human being. And now he was on his deathbed at Astapovo Station, and the whole world

waited with bated breath for the announcement of his death. Petya as caught up in the universal anticipation of an event that seemed incredible and impossible where the immortal known as "Lev Tolstoi" was concerned. And when the event had become a reality, Petya was so crushed by the news that he stood motionless, leaning against the slimy, wet trunk of an acacia.

It was just as mournful and depressing at the *gymnasium* as in the streets. The boys were hushed, there was no running up and down the stairs, and they spoke in whispers, as in church at a requiem mass. During recesses they sat around in silence on the window-sills. The older boys of the seventh and eighth forms gathered in small groups on the landings and near the cloak-room where they furtively rustled the pages of their newspapers, since it was against the rules to bring them to school. Lessons dragged on stiffly and quietly with maddening monotony. The inspector or one of the assistant teachers would look in through the panes of the classroom door, their faces bearing an identical expression of cold vigilance. Petya felt that this familiar world of the gymnasium, with the official uniforms and frock-coats of the teachers, the light-blue stand-up collars of the ushers, the silent corridors where the tiled floor resounded to the click of the inspector's heels, the faint odour of incense near the carved oaken doors of the school chapel on the fourth floor, the occasional jangling of a telephone in the office downstairs, and the* tinkling of test-tubes in the physics laboratory—this was a world utterly remote from the great and terrible thing that, according to Petya, was taking place beyond the walls of the gymnasium, in the city, in Russia, throughout the world.

What actually was taking place outside?

Petya would look out of the window from time to time, but could see only the familiar uninteresting scene of the streets leading to the railway. He saw the wet roof of the law-court, a beautiful structure with a statue of the blind Themis in front. Beyond was the cupola of the St. Panteleimon Church, the Alexandrovsky district fire-tower and, in the distance, the damp, gloomy haze of the workers' quarter with its factory chimneys, warehouses and a certain leaden darkness on the horizon which reminded him of something that had happened long ago and which he could not quite place. It was only after lessons had ended for the day and Petya found himself in the street that he suddenly remembered it all.

An early twilight descended on the city. Oil lamps lit up the shop windows, throwing sickly yellow streaks of light on the wet pavements. The ghostly elongated shadows of passers-by flitted through the mist. Suddenly there was a sound of singing. Row after row of people with their arms linked were Founding the corner. A hat-less student marched in front, pressing a black-framed portrait of Lev Tolstoi to his breast. The damp wind ruffled his fair hair. "You fell, a victim in the fight," the student was singing in a defiant tenor above the discordant voices of the crowd. Both the student and the procession of singing people had suddenly and with great force brought back to Petya a long-forgotten time and street. Then, as now, the pavement had glittered in the mist, and along it marched a crowd of students—mostly men and a few women wearing tiny karakul hats—and factory workers in high boots. They had sung "You fell a victim." A scrap of red bunting had bobbed over the heads of the crowd. That had been in 1905.

As if to complete the picture, Petya heard the clickety-clack of horseshoes

striking sparks on the wet granite cobbles. A Cossack patrol galloped out of a side-street. Their peakless caps were cocked at a rakish angle and short carbines dangled behind their shoulders. A whip cut the air near Petya and the strong odour of horses' sweat filled his nostrils. In an instant everything was a whirling, shouting, running mass.

Petya held his cap with both hands as he jumped out of the way. He bumped into something hot. It turned over. He saw that it was a brazier outside the greengrocer's. The hot coals scattered and mixed with the smoking chestnuts. The street was empty.

For days Tolstoi's death was the sole topic of conversation in Russia. Extra editions of the newspapers told the story of Tolstoi's departure from his home in Yasnaya Polyana. Hundreds of telegrams date-lined Astapovo Station described the last hours and minutes of the great writer. In a flash the tiny, unknown Astapovo Station became as world-famous as Yasnaya Polyana, and the name of the obscure station-master Ozolin who had taken the dying man into his house was on everybody's lips.

Together with the names of Countess Sofya Andreyevna and Chertkov, these new names—Astapovo and Ozolin— which accompanied Tolstoi to his grave, were just as frightening to Petya as the black lettering on the white ribbons of the funeral wreaths.

Petya noted with surprise that this death, which everyone regarded as a "tragedy," apparently had something to do with the government, the Holy Synod, the police, and the gendarmerie corps. Whenever he saw the bishop's carriage with a monk sitting on the box next to the coachman, or the clattering droshki of the chief of police, he was certain that both the bishop and the chief of police were rushing somewhere on urgent business connected with the death of Tolstoi.

Petya had never before seen his father in such a state of mind, not actually excited, but, rather, exalted and inspired. His usually kind frank face suddenly became sterner and younger. The hair above his high, classic forehead was combed back student-fashion. But the aged, red-rimmed eyes full of tears behind his pince-nez conveyed such grief, that Petya's heart ached with pity for his father.

Vasily Petrovich came in and put down two stacks of tightly bound exercise books on the table. Before changing into the old jacket he wore about the house, he took a handkerchief from the back pocket of his frock-coat with its frayed silk lapels and wiped his wet face and beard thoroughly. Then he jerked his head decisively.

"Come on, boys, wash your hands and we'll eat!"

Petya sensed his father's mood. He realized that Vasily Petrovich was taking Tolstoi's death badly, that for him Tolstoi was not only an adored writer, he was much more than that, almost the moral centre of his life. All this he felt keenly, but could not put his feelings into words.

Petya had always responded quickly to his father's moods, and now he was deeply upset. He grew quiet, and his bright inquiring eyes never once left his father's face.

Pavlik, who had just turned eight and had become a schoolboy, was oblivious to all that was taking place; he was completely absorbed in the affairs of his preparatory class and his first impressions of school.

"During our writing lesson today we raised an obstruction!" he said,

pronouncing the difficult word with obvious pleasure. "Old Skeleton ordered Kolya Shaposhnikov to leave the room although he wasn't to blame. Then we all booed with our mouths closed until Skeleton banged so hard on the desk that the ink-pot bounced up to the ceiling!"

"Stop it! You should be ashamed of yourself," his father said with a pained look. Suddenly, he burst out, "Heartless brats! You should be whipped! How *could* you mock an unfortunate, sick teacher whose days are almost numbered? How could you be so brutal?" Then, apparently trying to answer the questions that had been worrying him all those days, he went on: "Don't you realize that the world cannot live on hate? Hate is contrary to Christianity and to plain common sense. And this at a time when they are laying to rest a man who, perhaps, is the last true Christian on earth."

Father's eyes became redder still. Suddenly he smiled wanly and put his hands on the boys' shoulders. Gazing at each in turn he said:

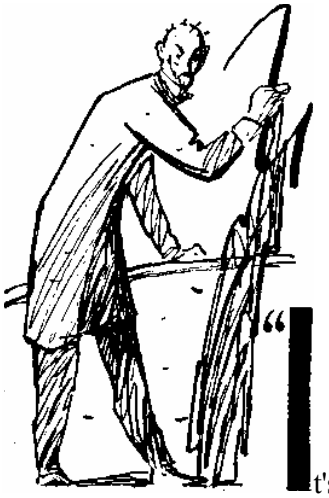
"Promise me that you will never torture your fellow-creatures."

"I never did," Petya said softly.

Pavlik screwed up his face and pressed his close-cropped head against Father's frock-coat which smelt of a hot iron and faintly of moth-balls.

"Daddy, I'll never do it again. We didn't know what we were doing," he said, wiping his eyes with his fists and sniffling.

SKELETON



"It's terrible, say what you like, it's terrible," Auntie said at dinner. She put down the ladle and pressed her fingers to her temples. "You can think what you like about Tolstoi— personally, I look on him as the greatest of writers—but all his non-resistance and vegetarianism are ridiculous, and as for the Russian government, its attitude in the matter is abominable. We are disgraced in the eyes of the whole world! As big a disgrace as Port Arthur, Tsushima, or Bloody Sunday."

"I beg you to—" Father said anxiously. "No, please don't beg me. We have a dull-witted tsar and a dull-witted government! I'm ashamed of being a Russian."

"Stop, I beg you!" Father shouted. His chin jutted forward and his beard shook slightly. "His Majesty's person is sacred. He is above criticism. I won't

permit it. Especially in front of the children."

"I'm sorry, I won't do it again," Auntie answered hurriedly.

"Let's drop the subject."

"There's just one thing I can't understand, and that is how an intelligent, kind-hearted man like you, who loves Tolstoi, can honestly regard as sacred a man who has covered Russia with gallows and who—"

"For God's sake," Father groaned, "let's not discuss politics. You are an expert at turning any conversation into a political discussion! Can't we talk without getting mixed up in politics?"

"My dear Vasily Petrovich, you still haven't realized that everything in our lives is politics. The government is politics. The church is politics. The schools are politics. Tolstoi is politics."

"How dare you speak like that?" "But I will!"

"Blasphemy! Tolstoi is *not* politics." "That's exactly what he is!"

And for long after, while Petya and Pavlik were doing their home-work in the next room, they could hear the excited voices of Father and Auntie, interrupting each other.

"Master and Man, Concession, Resurrection!" "War and Peace, Platon Karatayev!" "Platon Karatayev, too, is politics!" *"Anna Karenina,* Kitty, Levin!" "Levin argued communism with his brother!" "Andrei Bolkonsky, Pierre!" "The Decembrists!" "Haji Murat!" "Nikolai Palkin!" *(The derogatory nickname of Nicholas I, signifying "cudgel."-Tr).*

"Stop, I beg you. The children can hear us."

Pavlik and Petya were sitting quietly at Father's desk, beside the bronze oil lamp with the green glass lampshade.

Pavlik had finished his home-work and was busy putting together his new writing outfit of which he was still very proud. He was pasting a transfer on his pencil-box, patiently rolling up the top layer of wet paper with his finger. A multi-coloured bouquet of flowers bound with light-blue ribbons could be seen through it. He heard the voices in the dining-room, but did not pay any attention to them; his mind was full of the incident that had taken place during the writing lesson earlier" in the day. The "obstruction," which at first sight seemed such a daring and funny prank, now appeared in another light altogether. Pavlik could not banish the horrible scene from his eyes.

There at the blackboard stood the teacher, old Skeleton. He was in the last stages of consumption and was ghastly thin. His blue frock-coat hung loosely about his shoulders. It was too long and old, and very worn, but there were new gold buttons on it. His starched dickey bulged casually on his sunken chest and a skinny neck protruded from the wide greasy collar. Skeleton stood stock-still for a moment or two, challenging the class with his dark eyes. Then he turned swiftly to the blackboard, picked up a piece of chalk with his thin, transparent fingers, and began tracing out the letters.

In the ominous quiet they could hear the scratching of the chalk on the slate: a light, delicate touch when he outlined a feathery curlicue and a loud screech as he drew an amazingly straight line at a slant. Skeleton would crouch and then suddenly straighten again, just like a puppet. He'd cock his head to one side, utterly oblivious to his surroundings, and either sing out "stro-o-ke" in a high thin voice, or "line" in a deep rasping one.

"Stroke, line. Stroke, line."

Suddenly a voice from the last row, still higher and as fine as a hair, mimicked, "Stro-o-ke." Skeleton's back twitched, as if he had been stabbed, but he pretended he hadn't heard. He continued writing, but the chalk was already crumbling in his emaciated fingers, and his large shoulder-blades jerked painfully beneath the threadbare frock-coat.

"Stroke, line. Stroke, line," he sang out and his neck and large ears became crimson.

"Stro-o-oke! Str-rr-oke! Stro-o-oke!" mimicked someone in the last row. All of *a* sudden Skeleton spun round, strode rapidly down the aisle and grabbed the first boy at hand. He yanked him up from his desk, dragged him to the door, and threw him out of the class-room. Then he banged the door so hard that the panes rattled and dry putty fell all over the parquet floor.

Skeleton walked back to the blackboard with heavy steps. He was wheezing loudly as he picked up the chalk and was about to continue the lesson. Just then he heard the hum of steady, barely audible booing. Startled, he froze into immobility. His knees trembled visibly. His cuffs and baggy blue trousers trembled too. His black sunken eyes glared at the boys with undisguised hatred. But he had no way of finding out the culprits. They were all sitting with their mouths tightly shut, looking quite indifferent, and yet they were all booing steadily, monotonously, and imperceptibly. The whole class was booing, but no one could be accused of it. Then a tortured scream of pain and rage broke from his lips. He was jerking like a puppet as he hurled the chalk at the blackboard. It broke into bits. Skeleton stamped his foot. His eyes became bloodshot. His thin hair was plastered to his damp forehead. His neck twitched convulsively and he tore open his collar. He rushed over to his desk, hurled the chair aside, flung the class register against the wall, and began pounding the desk with his fists. He no longer heard his own voice *as* he shouted, "Ruffians! Ruffians!" The inkpot bounced up and down, and the purple liquid stained his loosened dickey, his bony hands and damp forehead. The scene ended when Skeleton, suddenly becoming limp, sat down on the window-sill, rested his head against the frame and was seized with a terrible coughing spell. His deeply sunken temples, almost black eye-sockets, and bared yellow teeth made his face look like the skull of a skeleton. Were it not for the sweat streaming down his forehead, one could have easily taken him for a corpse.

That was the picture Pavlik could not banish from his mind. The boy felt terribly oppressed; however, his mental state in no way interfered with the job in hand. He bestowed special care on transferring the picture, for he did not want to make a hole in the wet paper and spoil the bouquet and light-blue ribbons that looked so bright in the light of the lamp.

Petya, meanwhile, was absent-mindedly leafing through a thick notebook. There were emblems scratched out on the black oilskin cover—an anchor, a heart pierced with an arrow and several mysterious initials. He was listening to Father and Auntie arguing in the dining-room. Some words were repeated more often than others; they were: "freedom of thought," "popular government," "constitution," and, finally, that burning word—"revolution."

"Mark my words, it will all end in another revolution," Auntie said.

"You're an anarchist!" Father shouted shrilly.

"I'm a Russian patriot!"

"Russian patriots have faith in their tsar and their government!"

"Have you faith in them?"

"Yes, I have!"

Then Petya heard Tolstoi mentioned once more.

"Then why did this tsar and this government in whom you have such faith excommunicate Tolstoi and ban his books?"

"To err is human. They look on Tolstoi as a politician, almost a revolutionary, but Tolstoi is simply the world's greatest writer and the pride of Russia. He is above all your parties and revolutions. I'll prove that in my speech."

"Do you think the authorities will allow you to say that?"

"I don't need permission to say in public that Lev Tolstoi is a great Russian writer."

"That's what you think."

"I don't think it—I am absolutely sure!"

"You're an idealist. You don't know the kind of country you're living in. I beg you not to do that! They'll destroy you. Take my advice."

WHAT IS A RED?

Petya woke up in the middle of the night and saw Vasily Petrovich sitting at his desk in his shirtsleeves. Petya was used to seeing his father correct exercise-books at night. This time, however, Father was doing something else. The stacks of exercise-books were lying untouched, and he was writing something rapidly in his fine hand. Little fat volumes of an old edition of Tolstoi's works were scattered about the desk.

"Daddy, what are you writing?" "Go to sleep, sonny," Vasily Petrovich said. He walked over to the bed, kissed Petya, and made the sign of the cross over him.

The boy turned his pillow, laid his head on the cool side and fell asleep again.

Before he dozed off he heard the rapid scratching of a pen, the faint clinking of the little icon at the head of his bed, saw his father's dark head next to the green lamp-shade, the warm grow of the candle flame in the corner beneath the big icon, and the dry palm branch that cast a mysterious shadow on the wallpaper, as always bringing to mind the branch of Palestine, the poor sons of Solim, and the wonderful soothing music of Lermontov's poem:

Peace and silence all around,
On the earth and in the sky....

Next morning, while Vasily Petrovich was busy washing, combing his hair, and fastening a black tie to a starched collar, Petya had a chance to see what his father had been writing during the night.

An ancient home-made exercise-book sewn together with coarse thread lay on the desk. Petya recognized it immediately. Its usual place was in Father's dresser, next to the other family relics: the yellowed wedding candles, a spray of orange blossom, his dead mother's white kid gloves and little bead bag, her tiny mother-of-pearl opera-glasses, some dried leaves of a wild pear tree that grew on Lermontov's grave, and a collection of odds and ends which, in Petya's view, were just junk, but to Vasily Petrovich very precious.

Petya had leafed through the exercise-book once before. Half of it was taken up with la speech Vasily Petrovich had written on the hundredth anniversary of Pushkin's birth; there had not been anything in the other half. The boy now saw that a new speech filled up this yellowed half of the book. It was written in the

same fine hand, and its subject was Tolstoi's death. This is how it began:

"A great Russian writer is dead. Our literary sun has set."

Vasily Petrovich put on a pair of new cuffs and his best hollow-gold cufflinks, carefully folded the exercise-book in two and put it in his side-pocket. Petya watched his father drink a quick glass of tea and then proceed to the hall where he put on his heavy coat with the frayed velvet collar. The boy noticed that his fingers were trembling and his pince-nez was shaking on his nose. For some reason, Petya suddenly felt terribly sorry for his father. He went over to him and brushed against his coat-sleeve, as he used to do when he was a very small boy.

"Never mind, we'll show them yet!" Father said and patted his son's back.

"I still advise you against it," Auntie said solemnly as she looked into the hall.

"You're wrong," Vasily Petrovich replied in a soft tremulous voice. He put on his wide-brimmed black hat and went out quickly.

"God grant that I am wrong!" Auntie sighed. "Come on, boys, stop wasting time or you'll be late for school," she added and went over to help Pavlik, her favourite, buckle on his satchel, as he had not yet mastered the fairly simple procedure.

The day slipped by, a short and, at the same time, an interminably long and dreary November day, full of a vague feeling of expectation, furtive rumour, and endless repetition of the same agonizing words: "Chertkov," "Sofya Andreyevna," "Astapovo," "Ozolin."

It was the day of Tolstoi's funeral.

Petya had spent all his life on the southern sea coast, in the Novorossiisk steppe region, and had never seen a forest. But now he had a very clear mental picture of Yasnaya Polyana, of woods fringing an overgrown ravine. In his mind's eye Petya saw the black trunks of the ancient, leafless lindens, and the plain pine coffin containing the withered, decrepit body of Lev Tolstoi being lowered into the grave without priest or choir boys attending. And overhead the boy could see the ominous clouds and flocks of crows, exactly like those that circled over the church steeple and the bleak Kulikovo Field in the rainy twilight.

As usual, Father returned from his classes when the lamp had been lit in the dining-room. He was excited, happy and deeply moved. When Auntie, not without anxiety, asked him whether he had delivered his speech and what the reaction had been, Vasily Petrovich could not restrain the proud smile that flashed radiantly beneath his pince-nez.

"You could have heard a pin drop," he said, taking his handkerchief out of his back-pocket and wiping his damp beard. "I never expected the young bounders to respond so eagerly and seriously. And that goes for the young ladies too. I repeated it for the seventh form of the Maryinsky School."

"Were you actually given permission to do so?" "I didn't ask anyone's permission. Why should I? I hold that the literature teacher is fully entitled to discuss with his class the personality of *any* famous Russian writer, especially when the writer in question happens to be Tolstoi. What is more, I believe that it is my duty to do so." "You're so reckless."

Later in the evening some young people, strangers to the family, dropped in: two students in very old, faded caps, and a young woman who also seemed to be

a student. One of the youths sported a crooked pince-nez on a black ribbon, wore top-boots, smoked a cigarette and emitted the smoke through his nostrils; the young woman had on a short jacket and kept pressing her little chapped hands to her bosom. For some reason or other they were reluctant to come into the rooms, and remained in the hall talking with Vasily Petrovich for a long time. The deep, rumbling bass seemed to belong to the student with the pince-nez, and the pleading, lisping voice of the young woman kept repeating the same phrase over and over again at regular intervals:

"We feel certain that as a progressive and noble-minded person and public figure, you won't refuse the student body this humble request."

The third visitor kept wiping his wet shoes shyly on the door mat and blowing his nose discreetly.

It turned out that news of Vasily Petrovich's talk had somehow reached the Higher Courses for Women and the Medical School of the Imperial University in Odessa, and the student delegation had come to express their solidarity and also to request him to repeat his lecture to a Social-Democratic student circle. Vasily Petrovich, while flattered, was unpleasantly surprised. He thanked the young people but categorically refused to address the Social-Democratic circle. He told them that he had never belonged to any party and had no intention of ever joining one, and added that he would regard any attempt to turn Tolstoi's death into something political as a mark of disrespect towards the great writer, as Tolstoi's abhorrence of all political parties and his negative attitude to politics generally were common knowledge.

"If that's the case, then please excuse us," the young lady said dryly. "We are greatly disappointed in you. Comrades, let's go."

The young people departed with dignity, leaving behind the odour of cheap tobacco and wet footprints on the doorstep.

"What an astonishing thing!" Vasily Petrovich said as he strode up and down the dining-room, wiping his pince-nez on the lining of his house jacket. "It's *really* astonishing how people always find an excuse to talk politics!"

"I warned you," Auntie said. "And I'm afraid the consequences will be serious."

Auntie's premonition turned out to be correct, although the results were not as immediate as she had expected. At least a month went by before the trouble began. Actually, the approaching events cast a few shadows before them. However, they seemed so vague that the Bachei family paid little attention to them.

"Daddy, what's a 'red'?" Pavlik asked unexpectedly, as was his wont, at dinner one day, his shining, naive eyes fixed on Father.

"Really, now!" Vasily Petrovich said. He was in excellent spirits. "It's a somewhat strange question. I'd say that red means . . . well—not blue, yellow, nor brown, h'm, and so on."

"I know *that.* But I'm talking about people, are there red people?"

"Oh, so that's what you mean! Of course there are. Take the North American Indians, for example. The so-called redskins."

"They haven't got to that yet in their preparatory class," Petya said haughtily. "They're still infants."

Pavlik ignored the insult. He kept his eyes on Father and asked:

"Daddy, does that mean you're an Indian?"

"Basically, no." Father laughed so loudly and boisterously that the pince-nez fell off his nose and all but landed in his soup.

"Then why did Fedya Pshenichnikov say you were a red?"

"Oho! That's interesting. Who is this Fedya Pshenichnikov?"

"He's in my form. His father is senior clerk in the Governor's office in Odessa."

"Well! If that's the case, then perhaps your Fedya knows best. However, I think you can see for yourself that I'm not red, the only time I ever get red is during severe frost."

"I don't like this," Auntie commented.

Not long afterwards a certain Krylevich, the bookkeeper of the mutual aid society at the boy's school where Vasily Petrovich taught, -dropped in one evening to see him about some savings-bank matters. When they had disposed of the matter, Krylevich, whom Vasily Petrovich had always found to be an unpleasant person, remained for tea. He stayed for an hour and a half, was incredibly boring, and kept turning the conversation to Tolstoi, praising Vasily Petrovich for his courage, and begging him for his notes, saying he wanted to read them at home. Father refused, and his refusal upset Krylevich. Standing in front of the mirror in the hall, putting on his flat, greasy cap with the cockade of the Ministry of Education, he said with a sugary smile:

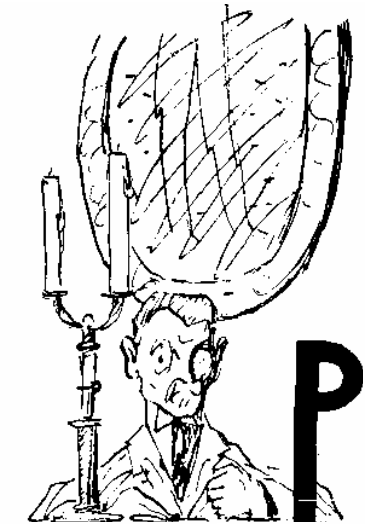
"I'm sorry you don't want to give me the pleasure, really sorry. Your modesty is worse than pride."

His visit left a nasty after-taste.

There were other minor happenings of the same order; for instance, some of their acquaintances would greet Vasily Petrovich in the street with exaggerated politeness, while others, on the' contrary, were unusually curt and made no attempt to conceal their disapproval.

Then, just before Christmas, the storm broke.

A HEAVY BLOW



Pavlik, who had just been "let out" for the holidays, was walking up and down in front of the house in his overlong winter topcoat, meant to last several seasons, and his new galoshes which made such a pleasant crunching sound and left such first-rate dotted prints with an oval trade mark in the middle on the fresh December snow. His report-card for the second quarter was in his satchel. His marks were excellent, there were no unpleasant reprimands and he even had "excellent" for attention, diligence, and behaviour, which, to tell the truth, was overdoing it a bit. But, thanks to his innocent chocolate-brown crystal-clear eyes, Pavlik had the happy knack of always landing on his feet.

The boy's mood harmonized with the holiday season, and only one tiny little worm of anxiety wriggled down in the deep recesses of his soul. The trouble was that today, after the last lesson, the preparatory class, throwing caution to the winds, had organized another "obstruction." This time they took revenge on the doorman who had refused to let them out before the bell rang. The boys got together and tossed somebody's galosh into the cast-iron stove that stood next 'to the cloak-room, with the result that a column of acrid smoke rose up, and the doorman had to flood the stove with water. At that moment the bell rang, and the preparatory class scattered in a body. Now Pavlik was worried that the inspector might get to know about their prank, and that would lead to serious complications. This was the sole blot in his feeling of pure joy at the thought of the holidays ahead.

Suddenly Pavlik saw what he feared most. A messenger was coming down the street and heading straight for him; he wore a cap with a blue band land his coat was trimmed with a lambskin collar from which Pavlik could see the blue stand-up collar of his tunic. He was carrying a large cardboard-bound register under his arm. The messenger walked up leisurely to the gate, looked at the triangular lamp with the house number underneath it, and stopped. Pavlik's heart sank.

"Where do the Bacheis live?" the messenger asked.

Pavlik realized that his end had come. There could be no doubt that this was an official note to his father concerning the behaviour of Pavel Bachei, preparatory-class pupil—in other words, the most dreadful fate that could befall

a schoolboy.

"What is it? Do they want Father?" Pavlik asked with a sickly smile. He did not recognize his own voice and blushed a deep crimson as he added, "You can give it to me, I'll deliver it and you won't have to climb the stairs!"

"I must have his signature," the messenger said sternly, curling his big moustache.

"Second floor, number four," Pavlik whispered and felt hot, choked, nauseous, and scared to death.

It never dawned on the boy that the messenger was a stranger. And in any case, this being his first year at school, he could not possibly know all the personnel.

The moment the front door closed after the messenger the light went out for Pavlik. The world with all its beauty and freshness no longer existed for him. It had vanished on the instant. The crimson winter sun was setting beyond the blue-tinted snow-covered Kulikovo Field and the station; the bells of the frozen cab horse around the corner tinkled as musically as ever; the pots of hot cranberry jelly, set out on the balconies to cool, were steaming as usual, the coat of delicate pale-blue snow on the balcony railings and the steam curling over the pots seemed as cranberry-red as the cooling jelly itself; the street, full of the holiday spirit, was as gay and as lively as ever.

Pavlik no longer noticed any of this. At first he made up his mind that he would never go home again—he would roam the streets until he died of hunger or froze to death. Then, after he 'had walked around the side-streets, he took a sacred vow to change his whole way of life and never, never take part in any "obstructions" again; moreover, he would be a model pupil, the best-behaved boy not only in Odessa, but in all Russia, and thus earn Father's and Auntie's forgiveness. Then he began to feel sorry for himself, for his ruined life, and even started to cry, smearing the tears all over his face. In the end pangs of hunger drove him, home and, utterly exhausted with suffering, he appeared on the threshold after the lamps had been lit. Pavlik was ready to confess and repent when he suddenly noticed that the whole family was in a state of great excitement. The excitement, apparently, had nothing at all to do with the person of Pavlik, as no one paid the slightest attention to him when he came in.

The dining-room table had not been cleared. Father was striding from room to room, his shoes squeaking loudly and 'his coat-tails flying. There were red spots on his face.

"I told you. I warned you," Auntie kept repeating, as she swung back and forth on the swivel stool in front of the piano with its wax-spotted silver candlesticks.

Petya was breathing on the window-pane and etching with his finger the words, "Dear sir, Dear sir."

It turned out that the messenger had been from the office of the Education Department and had nothing to do with the gymnasium at all. He had delivered a message to Councillor Bachei, requesting him to appear the following day "to explain the circumstances which prompted him to deliver an unauthorized speech to his students on the occasion of Count Tolstoi's death."

When Vasily Petrovich returned from the Education Department next day, he sat down in the rocker in his frock-coat and folded his arms behind his head. The moment Petya saw his pale forehead and trembling jaw, he knew something

terrible had happened.

Father was reclining on the wicker back of the chair and rocking nervously, shoving off with the toe of his squeaking shoe.

"Vasily Petrovich, for God's sake, tell me what happened," Auntie said finally, her kind eyes wide with fright.

"Please, leave me alone!" Father said with an effort, and his jaw twitched more violently.

His pince-nez had slid down, and Petya saw two tiny pink dents on the bridge of his nose which gave his face the appearance of helpless suffering. The boy recalled that he had had this same look when Mother had died and lay in a white coffin covered with hyacinths; then, too, Father had rocked back and forth nervously, arms folded behind his head, his eyes filled with tears. Petya walked over to Father, put his arms around his shoulders, which bore faint traces of dandruff, and hugged him.

"Daddy, don't!" he said gently.

Father shook the boy's arms off, jumped up, and gesticulated so violently that his starched cuffs popped out with a snap.

"In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ—leave me alone!" he shouted in an agonized voice and fled into the room that was both his study and bedroom and the boys' room as well.

He divested himself of jacket and shoes, lay down and turned his face to the wall.

At the sight of Father lying huddled up, of his white socks and the blue steel buckle on the crumpled back of his waistcoat, Petya broke down and began to cry, wiping his tears on his sleeve.

What actually had taken place at the Education Department? To begin with, Vasily Petrovich had spent a long and uncomfortable time sitting alone in the cold, officially sumptuous waiting-room on a gilded blue velvet chair of the kind usually seen in museums or theatre lobbies. Then a dandified official in the uniform of the Ministry of Education appeared, his figure reflected in the parquet floor, and informed Vasily Petrovich that His Excellency would see him.

His Excellency was sitting behind an enormous writing-desk. He was hunchbacked and, like most hunchbacks, was very short, so that nothing could be seen of him above the massive malachite desk set with two bronze malachite candelabra, except a proud, malicious head, iron grey land closely-cropped, propped up by a high starched collar and white tie. He was wearing his formal civil service dress-coat with decorations.

"Why did you take the liberty of appearing here without your uniform?" His Excellency demanded, without offering the caller a seat or getting up himself.

Vasily Petrovich was taken aback, but when he tried to picture his old uniform with the rows of holes where Petya had once yanked the buttons off together with the cloth, he smiled good-naturedly, to his own surprise, and even waved his hands somewhat humorously.

"I would request you not to act the clown. Don't wave your arms about: you are in an office, not on the stage."

"My dear sir!" Vasily Petrovich said as the blood rushed to his face.

"Silence!" barked the official in the best departmental manner, as he crashed his fist down on a pile of papers. "I am a member of the Privy Council, 'Your Excellency' to you, not 'my dear sir'! Be good enough to remember where you

are and sta-a-and to attention! I summoned you here to present you with an alternative," he continued, pronouncing the word "alternative" with evident relish, "to present you with an alternative: either publicly recant your baleful errors in the presence of the School Inspector and the students at one of the next lessons, and explain the demoralizing effects of Count Tolstoi's teachings on Russian society, or hand in your resignation. Should you refuse to do so, you will be discharged under Article 3 with no explanation and with all the unfortunate consequences as far as you are concerned. I will not tolerate anti-government propaganda in my district. I will mercilessly and unhesitatingly suppress every instance of it."

"Allow me, Your Excellency!" Vasily Petrovich said in a trembling voice. "Lev Tolstoi, our famous man of letters, is the pride and glory of all Russia. I don't understand. What have politics got to do with it?"

"First of all, Count Tolstoi is an apostate, excommunicated from the Orthodox Church by the Holy Synod. He is a man who dared to encroach upon the most sacred principles of the Russian Empire and its fundamental laws. If you cannot grasp this, then government service is not the place for you!"

"I regard that as an insult," Vasily Petrovich said with great difficulty, as he felt his jaw begin to tremble.

"Get out!" roared the official, rising.

Vasily Petrovich left the office with his knees shaking, a shaking that he could not control either on the marble staircase, where in two white niches there were two gypsum busts of the tsar and tsarina in la pearl tiara, or in the cloak-room, where a massive attendant threw his coat to him over the barrier, or even later, in the cab, a luxury the Bachei family indulged in only on very special occasions.

And so here he was, lying on the bed-clothes with his feet tucked up under him, deeply insulted, powerless, humiliated, and overwhelmed by the misfortune that had befallen not only him personally but, as he now realized, his whole family as well. To be discharged under Article 3 with no grounds stated meant more than the black list and social ostracism, it signified in all probability an administrative exile, i.e., utter ruin, poverty, and the end of the family. There was only one way out—a public recantation.

By nature Vasily Petrovich was neither hero nor martyr. He was an ordinary kind-hearted, intelligent man, a decent, honest intellectual, the kind known as an "idealist," and a "pure soul." His university tradition would not allow him to retreat. In his opinion a "bargain with one's conscience" was the epitome of moral degradation. And, nevertheless, he wavered. The pit they had dug for him so ruthlessly would not bear thinking about. He realized that there was no way out, although he tried to think of one.

Vasily Petrovich was so disheartened that he even decided to petition the Emperor and sent for ten kopeks' worth of the best "ministerial" stationery from the shop round the corner. He still adhered to his belief that the tsar—the Lord's Anointed—was just and upright.

Perhaps he would actually have written to the tsar, had it not been for the fact that at this juncture Auntie took a hand in the matter. She told the cook on no account to go for any "ministerial" stationery, and addressing herself to Vasily Petrovich said:

"My God, you're the perfect innocent! Don't you understand that they are one

and the same bunch?"

Vasily Petrovich blinked confusedly and kept repeating:

"But what's to be done, Tatyana Ivanovna? Tell me, just what can I do?"

Auntie, however, had no advice to offer. She retreated to her little room next to the kitchen, sat down at her dressing-table, and pressed a crumpled lace handkerchief to her red nose.

REQUIEM

It was Christmas Eve, the twenty-fourth of December, a day that had a special meaning for the Bachei family. It was the day of Mother's patron saint. Every year on that day they visited the cemetery to offer up a mass for the dead. They set out today too. There was a blizzard blowing and the blinding whiteness hurt their eyes. The snow-drifts at the cemetery blended with the white of the sky. Fine, powdery snow crystals rose over the black iron railings and crosses. The wind whistled through old metal wreaths with porcelain flowers. Petya stood knee-deep in the fresh snow. He had taken off his cap, but still had on a hood. He was praying diligently, trying to visualize his dead mother, but could recall only minor details: a hat with a feather in it, a veil, the hem of a wide silk dress with a fringe on it. Two kind eyes were smiling at him through the dotted veil tied under her chin. That was all Petya could remember. There was a faint trace of a long past grief that time had healed, the fear of his own death, and the gold letters of Mother's name on the white marble slab from which the sexton had carelessly brushed the snow just before they had arrived. Next to it was Grandma's grave, and there was a vacant place between the two graves where, as Vasily Petrovich was wont to say, he would one day be laid at rest between his mother and his wife, the two women he had loved so faithfully and steadfastly.

Petya crossed himself and bowed at the proper moments, he kept thinking about his mother, and, at the same time, observed the priest, the psalm-reader, Father, Pavlik, and Auntie. Pavlik was fidgeting all the time, the turned-up hood irritated his ears and he kept tugging at it. Auntie was weeping into her muff quietly. Father stood with eyes fixed on the tombstone, his folded hands held humbly before him and his greying head with the long seminarist's hair bent low. Petya knew Father was thinking about Mother. But he had no idea of the terrible conflict raging within him. Especially now did Vasily Petrovich miss her, her love, and her moral support. He thought of the day when he, an eager young man, had read to her his essay on Pushkin, of how they had both discussed it long and heatedly, of the glorious morning, when he had put on his new uniform

and was standing in the hall, ready to set out to read his essay, and she had handed him his freshly-pressed handkerchief, still warm from the hot iron, kissed him fondly, and crossed him with her thin fingers; and afterwards, when he had returned home in triumph, they had had a hearty dinner and little Petya, whom they were training to be an independent young man, had smeared his porridge all over his fat cheeks and kept repeating, "Daddy! Eat!" his black eyes sparkling. How long ago, and yet, how close it all seemed! Now Vasily Petrovich had to decide his fate alone.

For the first time in his life he understood clearly something that he either could not or refused to understand before: that it was impossible in Russia to be an honest and independent person if one held a government job. One had to be a docile tsarist official, with no views of one's own, and obey the orders of other officials—one's superiors—unquestioningly, no matter how unjust or even criminal they might be. But worst of all, as far as Vasily Petrovich was concerned, was the fact that the one responsible for this state of affairs was none other than the Russian autocrat himself, the Anointed of the Lord, in whose sanctity and infallibility Vasily Petrovich had trusted so deeply and implicitly.

Now that this trust had been shaken, Vasily Petrovich turned whole-heartedly to religion. He offered up prayers for his dead wife, and implored divine help and guidance. But his prayers no longer brought him consolation. He crossed himself, bowed low, and yet somehow or other he seemed to see the priest and psalm-reader, who were rushing through the service, in a new and different light. Their words and actions no longer created the religious atmosphere of former years, but, instead, seemed crude, unnatural, as if Vasily Petrovich himself was not praying, but only observing two shamans performing some rite. That which formerly had moved him deeply was now bereft of all its poetry.

The priest, in a mourning chasuble of brocade with a silver cross embroidered on the back, his short arms wrapped in the dark sleeves of a protruding tunic, was chanting the beautiful words of the requiem as he deftly swung the censer to and fro, making the hot coals glow like rubies. Purple smoke poured from it, turned grey quickly and melted in the wind, leaving the air heavy with incense.

The psalm-reader had an enormous moustache and his winter overcoat was exactly like Vasily Petrovich's, even to the frayed velvet collar. His bulging eyes were reverently half closed, and his voice rose and fell as he quickly echoed the priest's singing. Both priest and psalm-reader made a pretence of not hurrying, although Vasily Petrovich could see they were rushing the service, as they had to officiate at other graves where they were eagerly awaited and whence impatient relatives were already signalling them. Their relief was evident when they finally reached the last part and put all their energy behind the words "the tears at the grave turn to singing," etc., after which the Bachei family kissed the cold silver cross, and while the psalm-reader was hurriedly wrapping it up in the stole, Vasily Petrovich shook the priest's hand and awkwardly pressed two silver rubles into his palm. The priest said, "I thank you!" and added, "I hear that you're having trouble with the Education Department. Have faith in the Lord, perhaps there is a way out. Good-bye for the present. Dreadful weather, isn't it? A regular blizzard."

Vasily Petrovich had caught a faint trace of insult in those words. Petya saw his face turn red. Suddenly there flashed into Vasily Petrovich's mind the

Education Department official bawling at him and his own humiliating fear, and once again the feeling of pride, which until then he had tried so hard to subordinate to Christian humility, welled up in him. At that moment he decided that not for anything in the world would he surrender, and if necessary he would suffer all the consequences for the sake of Truth.

However, once they had returned home from the cemetery and he had calmed down a little, his former doubts returned: had he the right to jeopardize his family?

Meanwhile, the school holidays pursued their usual course, the only difference being that this time they were not as jolly or as carefree as in previous years.

Tedious and tiresome as usual was the waiting for nightfall on Christmas Eve; appetizing smells drifted in from the kitchen while they awaited the appearance of the first star in the window—the signal to light the lamps and sit down to dinner and Christmas pudding. They had the usual Christmas party next day, and carol-singers came in carrying a star hung with tinsel and a round paper icon in the centre. Blue diamonds of moonlight glittered festively and mysteriously on the frosted window-panes, and on New Year's Eve there was apple pie with a new silver coin hidden in it for good luck. The regimental bands played as usual in the clear, frosty noonday for the Twelfth-Day parade on Cathedral Square. The holidays were coming to an end. Some kind of decision had to be made. Vasily Petrovich became despondent, and his depression affected the boys. Auntie alone tried to keep up the holiday spirit. She put on a new silk dress, and all her favourite rings were brought out to adorn her slender fingers; she smelled of "Coeur de Jeannette" perfume, and she would sit at the piano, open a large folio, and play Madame Vyaltseva's repertoire of waltzes, polkas, and gipsy serenades. On Twelfth-Day Eve she decided to have the traditional fortune-telling. They poured cold water into a basin and dropped melted paraffin into it, as they had no wax, and then interpreted the various shapes it froze into; in the kitchen they burned balls of crumpled paper and then told the meaning of the shadows cast by them on the freshly whitewashed wall. But there was something strained in all this.

THE RESIGNATION

Late at night—the last night of the school holidays—Petya, who was drowsing off to sleep, again heard Father and Auntie talking heatedly in the dining-room.

"You cannot and you must not do such a thing!" Auntie was saying in an excited voice. "What then?" Father asked, and there was a sharp click as he cracked his knuckles. "What shall I do? How shall we live? Have I the right to do this? What a tragedy that Zhenya is no longer with us!"

"Believe me, if Zhenya were here now, she would never let you grovel before these officials!"

Petya soon fell asleep and did not hear any more, but an astonishing thing happened the next morning: for the first time in his life Vasily Petrovich did not put on his frock-coat and did not go to his classes. Instead, the cook was sent to the shop for "ministerial" stationery, and Vasily Petrovich wrote out his resignation in his clear flowing hand, unadorned by flourishes or curlicues.

His resignation was accepted coldly. However, there was no further unpleasantness—apparently, it was not in the interests of the Education Department to have the story spread round. And so, Vasily Petrovich found himself out of a job, the most terrible thing that could hap-

pen to a family man with no other means of support except his salary.

Vasily Petrovich had put aside a little money a long time ago; he had dreamed of going abroad with his wife, and then, after her death, with his 'boys. Now that dream evaporated. This money, together with what he would get from the mutual aid society, would see the family through the next year, if they lived frugally. But it was still a mystery how they were to exist after that, especially as another question arose: how were Petya and Pavlik to continue at the gymnasium? As the sons of a teacher they had been exempt from tuition fees; now, however, he would have to pay out of their meagre budget a sum that was beyond his means.

But worst of all, where Vasily Petrovich was concerned, was his enforced idleness, for he had been used to work all his life. He did not know what to do with himself and hung around the house for days on end in his old jacket, forgetting to go to the barber's, looking older every day, and making frequent visits to the cemetery where he spent long hours at his wife's grave.

Pavlik, still too young to be touched by the terrible thing that had befallen them, continued his former carefree existence. But Petya understood everything. The thought that he would have to leave school, remove the cockade from his

cap and wear his uniform with hooks instead of shiny metal buttons, as was the case with boys who had been expelled or had not matriculated, made him blush with shame. Things were aggravated by an ominous change in the attitude of the teachers and some of his class-mates.

In short, the New Year could not have begun worse. Petya was most unhappy and was amazed to see that Auntie, far from being upset or down-hearted, gave the impression of everything being fine. There was a look of determination in her eye which implied that she was going to save the family at all costs.

Her plan was as follows: she would serve tasty, nourishing, and inexpensive home-cooked meals to working intellectuals, which, to her mind, would yield enough to keep the family in food. In order to add to the income Auntie decided to move into the dining-room, move the cook into the kitchen, and let the two rooms, thus vacated, with board.

Father winced painfully at the mere thought of his home being turned into an "eating-house," but as there was no other way out, he gave in and said:

"Do whatever you think best."

That was Auntie's green light. "To let" notices that could be read clearly from the street were pasted on the windows of the two rooms. On the gate-post they nailed a little board that said: "Dinners served." It had been done artistically in oils by Petya and depicted a steaming tureen with the inscription mentioning single working intellectuals. Auntie believed that this would impart a social, political, and even an opposition note to their commercial undertaking. She began to buy new kitchen utensils and put in a stock of the best and freshest foods; she had a new calico dress and snow-white apron made for Dunyasha and spent most of her time studying the Molokhovets Cookery Book, that bible of every well-to-do home. She copied the most useful recipes into a special notebook and made up tasty and nourishing menus.

Never before had the Bachei family eaten so well—or, rather, feasted so. After a month's time they had all put on weight, including Vasily Petrovich, a fact that seemed strangely at variance with his status of a man persecuted by the government.

All would have gone well, perhaps even brilliantly, had it not been for the lack of customers. One might have thought that all the professional people had agreed never to dine again.

True, the first few days brought some customers. Two well-dressed bearded gentlemen with sunken cheeks and a fanatical glitter in their eyes called, discovered that there were no vegetarian dishes on the menu, and stamped out without bothering to say good-bye.

Then a saucy orderly in a peakless cap, serving in the Modlinsky Regiment, came in at the back door and asked for two portions of cabbage-soup for his officer. Auntie explained that there was no cabbage-soup on the menu, but that there was *soupe printaniere.* That, said the soldier, was quite all right with him, provided there was plenty of bread to go with it, as his gentleman had lost all his money at cards and was sitting in his quarters with a bad cold and nothing hot in his stomach for nearly two days. Auntie gave him two portions of *soupe printaniere* and plenty of bread on credit, and the orderly doubled down the stairs on his short, thick legs in worn-down boots, leaving the heavy odour of an infantry barracks in the kitchen. Two days later he appeared again; this time he carried off two portions of *bouillon* and meat patties, also on credit, and

promised to pay as soon as his gentleman won back his money; apparently, his gentleman never did, because the soldier disappeared for good.

No one else came to dine.

As far as letting the two rooms was concerned, things were not much better. The very day they put the little cards in the window a newly-wed couple made inquiries: he was a young army surgeon, and everything he had on was new and resplendent; she was a plump, dimpled blonde with a beauty-mark over her Cupid's-bow lips, wearing a squirrel-lined cloak and pert bonnet, and carrying a tiny muff on a cord. They seemed to be the personification of happiness. Their new, twenty-four carat gold wedding-rings shone so dazzlingly, they were surrounded by such a fragrant aroma of scented soap, cold cream, brilliantine, hair tonic, and Brokar perfume, the mixture of which seemed to Petya the very essence of newly-weddedness, that the Bachei flat with its old wallpaper and poorly-waxed floors suddenly appeared to be small, shabby, and dark.

While the young couple was looking over the rooms, the husband never once let go of his wife's arm, as if he were afraid she'd run off somewhere; the wife, in turn, pressed close to him as she looked round in horror and exclaimed in a loud singsong voice:

"Dahling, it's a barm! It's a real bahn! It smells like a kitchen! No, no, it's not at all what we're looking for!"

They left hurriedly. The army surgeon's silver spurs tinkled delicately, and the young wife raised her skirts squeamishly and stepped gingerly as if afraid to soil her tiny new shoes. It was only after the downstairs door had banged behind them that Petya realized the strange foreign word "bahn" was just plain "barn," and he felt so hurt he could have cried. Auntie's ears were still burning long after they had gone.

No one else came to see the rooms. And so Auntie's plans failed. The spectre of poverty again rose up before the Bachei family. Despair banished all hopes. Who knows what the outcome would have been, if salvation had not come one fine day—out of the blue, as it always does.

AN OLD FRIEND

It was really a glorious day, one of those March days when the snow has melted, the earth is black, a watery blueness breaks through the clouds over the bare branches of the orchards, a fresh breeze sweeps the first dust along the dry pavements, and the incessant tolling of the Lenten bells booms over the city like a great bass string. The bakeries sold pastry "skylarks" with charred raisin eyes, and swarms of rooks circled over Cathedral Square, over the huge corner house, over Libman's Cafe, and over the double-headed eagle above Gayevsky's, the chemist's, their spring din and clamour drowning out the sounds of the city.

It was a day Petya would long remember. It was the day he became a tutor and, for the first time in his life, was to be paid for a Latin lesson he gave to another boy. This other boy was Gavrik.

A few days before, on his way home from school, Petya was walking along slowly, lost in unhappy thoughts and visualizing the day in the near future when he would be expelled from the gymnasium for arrears of fees.

Suddenly, someone crashed into him from behind and punched his satchel so hard that his pencil-box shook and clattered. Petya stumbled and nearly fell; he turned, ready to charge his unseen enemy, and saw Gavrik, his feet planted apart and a grin on his face.

"Hi, Petya! Where've you been all this time?"

"It's you, you tramp! You're a fine chap, hitting one of your own!"

"Go on! I socked the satchel, not you."

"What if I had fallen?"

"I'd have caught you."

"How are things?"

"Not too bad. Earning a living."

Gavrik lived in Near Mills and Petya rarely saw him nowadays, but their childhood friendship was as strong as ever. Whenever they would meet and ask each other the usual "How are things?" Petya would shrug his shoulders and answer, "Still at school," while Gavrik would furrow his small round forehead and say, "Earning la living." Each time they met, Petya would hear the latest story, which inevitably ended the same way: either the current employer had gone bankrupt or he had cheated Gavrik out of his pay. Such was the case with the owner of the bathing beach between Sredny Fontan and Arcadia who had employed Gavrik for the season to unlock the bathing-boxes, take charge of hiring the striped bathing-suits, and keep an eye on the bathers' clothes. The beach owner disappeared at the end of the season without paying him a kopek, all he had had in the end were his tips. It was the same with the Greek who had hired a gang of dockers and who had brazenly cheated the men out of more than

half their wages. It was the same again when he had worked as bill-poster, and on many of the other jobs which he had taken in the hope of being at least a little help to Terenty's family and at the same time earning a bit for himself.

It was much more fun, although just as unprofitable in the long run, to work in the "Bioscope Realite" cinema on Richelieu Street, near the Alexandrovsky police-station In those days the cinema, that famous invention of the Lumiere brothers, was no longer a novelty, but, none the less, the magic of "moving pictures" continued to amaze the world. Cinemas mushroomed up all over the city, -and they became known as "illusions."

An "illusion" signified a multi-coloured electric-light bill-board, sometimes even with moving letters, and the bravura thunder of the pianola, a mechanical piano whose keys were pressed down and raced back and forth automatically, instilling in the audience a greater feeling of awe towards the inventions of the 20th century. Usually there were slot-machines in the foyer, and if you put five kopeks in the slot a bar of chocolate would slip out mysteriously, or brightly-coloured sugar eggs would roll out from under a bronze hen. Sometimes there would be a wax figure on exhibition in a glass case. As yet there were no specially built theatres for the "illusions," and the general practice was to rent a flat and use the largest room for the screen.

Madame Valiadis, widow of a Greek, an enterprising and highly imaginative woman, owned the "Bioscope Realite." She decided to wipe out all her rivals at once. To this end she first engaged Mr. Zingertal, a famous singer of topical ditties, to appear before each showing, and second, she decided to revolutionize the silent film by introducing sound effects. Crowds thronged to the "Bioscope Realite."

Mr. Zingertal, the popular favourite, duly appeared before each performance in front of a small screen in the former dining-room decorated with old flowered paper, a room as long and narrow as a pencil-box. Zingertal, a tall, thin Jew, wore a rather long frock-coat, yellowed pique vest, striped trousers, white spats and a black top hat which pressed down on his protruding ears. With a Mephistophelian smile on his long, clean-shaven, lined and hollow-cheeked face, he sang the popular tunes of the day, accompanying himself on a tiny violin, tunes such as "The Odessa girl is the girl for me," "The soldier boys are marching," and, finally, his hit song "Zingertal, my robin, play me on your violin." Then Madame Valiadis came on, wearing an ostrich hat and opera gloves minus the fingers to show off her rings; she sat at the battered old piano and, as the lights dimmed, began pounding out the accompaniment.

The lamp of the projector hissed, the film buzzed and rattled on, and tiny, cramped red or blue captions, which seemed to have been typed on a typewriter, appeared on the screen. Then, in quick succession, carne the shorts: a panorama of a cloudy Swiss lake that moved along jerkily and with great effort, followed by a Pathe news-reel with a train thundering into a station and a parade of helmeted, goose-stepping foreign soldiers who flashed by so quickly that they seemed to be running—all this was seen as if through a veil of rain or snow. Then Bleriot's monoplane emerged from the clouds for an instant—his famous Channel flight from Calais to Dover. Then came the comedy, and this was Madame Valiadis' greatest moment. Behind the flickering veil of raindrops a little monkey-like man called Knucklehead, learning to ride a bicycle, kept bumping into things and knocking them over; the audience not only saw all this,

they *heard* it as well. The crash and tinkle of falling glass accompanied the shattering of street lamps on the screen. Pails banged and clattered as house-painters in blouses tumbled off ladders and landed on the pavement. Dozens of dinner-sets were smashed to bits as they slid and dropped from the display window of a china shop. A cat mewed hysterically when the bicycle wheels rolled over its tail. The enraged crowd shook their fists and chased the fleeing Knucklehead. Police whistles screamed. Dogs barked. A fire-engine tore past. Bursts of laughter shook the darkened "illusion" room. And all the while, unseen by the audience, Gavrik sweated, earning his fifty kopeks a day. It was he who waited for his cue to smash the crockery, blow a whistle, bark, mew, ring a bell, shout "Catch him! Hold him!", stamp his feet to give the effect of a running mob, and dump on the floor a crate of broken glass, drowning out the unmerciful pounding on the battered keys that was Ma dame Valiadis' contribution on the other side of the screen.

Petya helped Gavrik on several occasions. The two of them would raise such a rumpus behind the screen that crowds would gather in the street. The popularity of the electric theatre grew tremendously.

But the avaricious widow was far from satisfied. Aware that the public liked politics, she ordered Zingertal to freshen up his repertoire with something political, and then raised the price of admission. Zingertal shrugged his shoulders, smiled his Mephistophelian smile and said, "As you wish"; next day he appeared with a new number entitled "Neckties, neckties" instead of the old "The soldier boys are marching."

Pressing the tiny violin to his shoulder with his blue horse-like chin, he flourished his bow, winked slyly at the audience, and, hinting at Stolypin, began:

Our Premier, Mr. X,
Hangs ties on people's necks,
A habit which we dreadfully deplore....

Zingertal was thrown out of the city within twenty-four hours; Madame Valiadis, forced to piay enormous bribes to the police and to close her "illusion," was ruined, while Gavrik was paid only a quarter of what he had earned.

GAVRIK'S DREAM

Now Gavrik was standing next to 'Petya in a greasy blue cotton smock over a tattered coat with a worn-out Astrakhan collar and cap to match, like those warn by middle-aged bookbinders, type-setters and waiters. ' Petya realized immediately that his friend had changed jobs again and was earning his daily bread at some other trade.

Gavrik was going on fifteen. His voice had changed to a youthful bass. He had not grown very much, but his shoulders were broader and stronger, and there were fewer freckles on his nose. His features had become more definite and his clear eyes were firm. And yet, there was still much of the child about him—such as his deliberate rolling sailor's gait, his habit of wrinkling his round forehead when puzzled by something- and his amazing accuracy in spitting through tightly-clenched teeth.

"Well, where are you working now?" Petya asked, his eyes taking in Gavrik's strange outfit.

"In the *Odessa Leaflet* print-shop."

"Tell me another!"

"It's the truth!"

"What do you do there?'"

"I deliver the ad proofs to the clients."

"Proofs?" Petya said doubtfully.

"Sure, proofs. Why?"

"Oh, nothing."

"Maybe you've never seen proof-sheets? Here, I'll show you some. See?"

With these words Gavrik put his hand into the breast pocket of his smock and pulled out a couple of packets of wet paper reeking of kerosene.

"Let me see!" Petya cried, grabbing a packet.

"Keep your paws off," Gavrik said good-naturedly, not at all in anger or from a desire to offend Petya, but out of sheer habit.

"Come here, I'll show them to you."

The boys walked over to an iron post near the gates, and Gavrik unrolled a damp paper covered all over with newspaper advertisements as black and as greasy as shoe polish. Most of them were illustrated, and Petya immediately recognized them from the pages of the *Odessa Leaflet,* which the Bachei family took in. Here were the Fleetfoot Shoes and the Guide Galoshes, waterproofs with peaked hoods sold by Lurie Bros., Faberge diamonds in open jewel cases, with black lines radiating from them, bottles of Shustov's rowan-berry brandy, theatre lyres, furriers' tigers, harness-makers' steeds, the black cats of fortune-tellers and palmists, skates, carriages, toys, suits, fur coats, pianos and

balalaikas, biscuits and elaborate cream cakes, Lloyd's ocean liners, and railway locomotives. And, finally, there were the impressive-looking, long, uninterrupted columns of joint-stock company reports and bank balances, showing their investments and fantastic dividends.

Gavrik's small, strong, ink-stained hands held the damp newspaper sheet, that magic, miniature record of the wealth of a big industrial and trading centre, so far beyond the reach of Gavrik and the thousands of other ordinary working people like him.

"There you are!" Gavrik said, and when he noticed that Petya seemed to be reflecting on the nature of man's wealth, an exercise in which he himself had often indulged when reading the ads or the signs and posters, he sighed and added, "Proofs!" Then he gazed ruefully at his canvas shoes that were a size too big and not the thing for the season. "How are things?"

"Not bad," Petya mumbled, lowering his eyes.

"Tell me another," Gavrik said.

"On my honour!"

"Then why did you take to serving dinners at home?"

Petya blushed crimson.

"It's true, isn't it?" Gavrik insisted.

"What if it is?" Petya said.

"It means you're hard up for money."

"We are not."

"Yes, you are. You can't even make ends meet."

"What do you mean?"

"Come off it, Petya. You can't fool me. I know your old man was booted out of his job and you haven't a kopek."

That was the first time Petya heard the truth about the family's finances put so simply and crudely.

"How do you know?" he asked weakly.

"Who doesn't? It's the talk of the town. But don't worry, Petya, they won't put him in the jug for it."

"Who ... won't be put in the jug?"

"Why, your old man."

"What are you talking about? What do you mean by the jug?"

Gavrik knew that Petya was naive but this was too much for him and he burst out laughing.

"What a fellow! He doesn't even know what the 'jug' means! It means being locked up in jail." "Where?"

"In jail!" Gavrik bellowed. "Do you know how people are jailed?"

Petya looked into Gavrik's serious eyes and for the first time he felt really frightened.

"Take it easy, they won't put your dad in jail," Gavrik said hurriedly. "They hardly ever jail people for Lev Tolstoi now. Take it from me." He bent close to Petya and added in a whisper, "They're picking up people right and left now for illegal books. For the *Workers' Paper* and *The Social-Democrat* too. But Lev Tolstoi doesn't interest them any more."

Petya looked at Gavrik with uncomprehending eyes. "Oh, what's the use of talking to you," Gavrik said disgustedly.

He had been ready to tell his friend the latest news: for instance, that his

brother Terenty had just returned from exile after all those years and was now working in the railway-yard, that some of the committee members had returned with him, that it was "business as usual" again as far as their activities were concerned, and that it had not been his own idea to get a job in the print-shop—he had been "spoken for" by these same committee members for a very definite purpose. Gavrik was about to explain just exactly what the purpose was, but he saw from Petya's expression that his friend had not the slightest idea of what he was talking about, land so he decided to keep mum for the time being.

"How's the dinners-at-home business going?" he asked, changing the subject. "Are there any cranks who want them?"

Petya shook his head sadly.

"I see," Gavrik said.

"Then it's a flop?"

"Yes."

"What are you going to do?"

"Somebody might rent the rooms."

"You mean you're letting rooms too? Things must be bad!" Gavrik whistled sympathetically.

"Don't worry, we'll manage. I can give lessons," Petya said stoically.

He had long since made up his mind to become a tutor and coach backward pupils, but did not quite know how to go about it. As a rule only university students or senior form boys gave lessons, but there was always room for the exception. The main thing was to be lucky and find a pupil to coach.

"How can you give lessons when you probably -don't know a darn thing yourself?" Gavrik said in his usual crude, straightforward way and sniggered good-naturedly.

Petya was hurt. There had 'been a time when he had really fooled about instead of swotting, but now he was putting everything he had into his lessons.

"I'm only kidding," Gavrik said. Suddenly he had a bright idea and quickly asked, "Look, can you teach Latin too?"

"What a question, of course I can!"

"That's the stuff!" Gavrik exclaimed. "How much would you charge to coach someone for the third form Latin exams?"

"What do you mean: 'how much'?"

"How much money?"

"I don't know," Petya mumbled in confusion. "Some tutors charge a ruble a lesson."

"That's far too much. Let's settle for half a ruble."

"What's it all about?" Petya asked.

"Never mind."

Gavrik stood silently for a few minutes, looking down at his moving fingers, as if making calculations.

"Go on, tell me!" Petya insisted.

"It's nothing very special," Gavrik answered. "Let's go this way." And, taking Petya by the arm, he led him down the street, peering into his face sideways.

Gavrik never liked to talk about himself or disclose his plans to people. Experience had taught him to be secretive. That was why, even though he had made up his mind to let Petya in on the dream of his life, he could not bring himself to talk about it, and so they both walked on in silence.

"You see," he began, "but first your word of honour that you won't tell a soul."

"Honour bright!" Petya exclaimed and involuntarily, from force of habit, crossed himself, looking the while at the cupolas of St. Panteleimon Church that shone blue beyond Kulikovo Field.

Gavrik opened his eyes wide and whispered:

"Here's my idea: I want to pass the gymnasium exams for the first, three forms without attending classes. Two chaps are helping me with the other subjects, but I'm sort of stuck with Latin."

This was so unexpected that Petya stopped dead in his tracks.

"What?"

"You heard me."

"But why should you study?" Petya blurted out in surprise.

"Why do *you* study?" Gavrik said with a hard and pugnacious glitter in his eye. "It's all right for you, but not for me—is that it? For all you know, it may be more necessary for me than for you."

He might have told Petya that since Terenty had returned from exile he had been talking a lot about the lack of educated people among the workers, about the fact that new struggles lay ahead. Probably after consulting some of the committee members, he had told Gavrik in no uncertain terms that whether he liked it or not, he would have to pass the gymnasium exams: he could first take the third form exams, then the sixth form exams, and then the final school-leaving exams. But Gavrik told Petya nothing of all this.

"Well, are you willing to have a go?" he asked instead. "My offer's half a ruble a lesson."

Petya felt embarrassed and, at the same time, flattered, and he blushed a delicate pink with pleasure.

"Oh, I'm willing," he said, and coughed, "only not for money."

"What do you mean? Do you think I'm a beggar? I'm working. Half a ruble a lesson, four lessons a month. That makes two silver pieces. I can afford it."

"Nothing doing. I won't take money for the lessons."

"Why won't you take it? Don't be a fool! Money doesn't lie around in the street. Especially now, when you're so hard up for it. At least you'll be able to give Auntie something for food."

That had a great effect on Petya. He suddenly pictured himself handing Auntie some money one fine day and saying nonchalantly, "Oh, it slipped my mind completely, Auntie. Here, I've earned a bit by giving lessons, please take it. It'll come in useful."

"All right," Petya answered. "I'll take you on. But remember: if you start fooling around, it'll be good-bye. I'm not used to taking money for nothing."

"I don't find it in the woodshed either," Gavrik said glumly. The friends parted till Sunday, which was the lap-pointed day for the first lesson.

A JAR OF JAM

Never had Petya prepared his own lessons so painstakingly as he was now preparing for his lessons with Gavrik, for his first appearance in the role of teacher. Proud and conscious of his responsibility, Petya did his very best to ensure the success of his venture. He pestered Father with endless questions about comparative linguistics. He consulted the Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopaedia and made copious notes. At school he worried the Latin master for explanations concerning the numerous rules of Latin syntax, a fact which amazed the teacher, since -he had no great opinion of Petya's diligence. Petya sharpened several pencils, got out pen and ink, dusted Father's desk, and arranged on it Pavlik's globe, his own twenty-five-powered microscope, and a few thick volumes—all with a view to creating a strictly academic atmosphere and instilling in Gavrik a reverence for science.

After dinner Vasily Petrovich left for the cemetery. Auntie took Pavlik to an exhibition. Dunyasha had the afternoon off and went to visit her relatives. Petya could not have wished for anything better. He paced up and down the room with his hands behind his back like a veteran schoolmaster and rehearsed his introductory speech for the first lesson. It would be wrong to say that he was nervous, but he felt something akin to what a skater feels as he is about to glide across the rink.

Gavrik was not long in coming. He appeared at exactly the appointed hour. It was significant that he did not come up the back stairs and through the kitchen, as was his wont, after whistling from the yard below; Gavrik rang the front-door bell, said "hullo" quietly, hung up his threadbare coat in the hall, and smoothed his hair in front of the mirror. His hands were scrubbed clean, and before entering he carefully tucked his cotton shirt with its mother-of-pearl buttons under his narrow belt. He had a new five-kopek notebook with a pink blotter peeping out of it and a new pencil stuck in the middle. Petya led his friend into the study and sat him down at the desk, between microscope and globe, which objects drew a guarded look from Gavrik.

"Well," Petya said sternly and suddenly became embarrassed.

He stopped, waited manfully for his bashfulness to pass, and then tried once more:

"Well.... Latin is one of the richest and mightiest of the Indo-European languages. Originally, as was the case with the Umbrian and Oscan languages, it was one of the group of main dialects of the non-Etruscan population of Central Italy, the dialect of the inhabitants of the Latium Plain, whence the Romans came. Is that clear?"

"No," Gavrik said, shaking his head.

"What is unclear?"

"The main dialects of the non-Etruscans," Gavrik repeated carefully, giving

Petya a pitiful look.

"Never mind. You'll soon catch on. It's just because it's new to you. Let's continue. At a time when the languages of the other peoples of Italy—say, the Etruscans, Iiapygians, and Ligurians, not counting, of course, the Umbrians and Sabellians who were akin to the Latins—remained, so to speak, isolated as local dialects in secluded regions," Petya made a circle with his arms in a highly professional manner to indicate that the other languages of Italy had remained secluded, "thanks to the Romans, Latin not only emerged as the main language of Italy, but developed into the literary language as well." Petya raised his finger significantly. "Clear?"

"No," Gavrik repeated miserably and shook his head again. "You know what, Petya? Show me their alphabet instead."

"I know what comes first better than you do," Petya said dryly.

"Maybe we can do the bit about the Etruscans and the Umbrians later, just now I'd like to take a shot at those Latin letters. Huh?"

"Who's tutor here? You or me?"

"You."

"Very well then, pay attention."

"I'm listening," Gavrik said obediently.

"Good, let's continue," Petya said as he paced up and down with his arms behind his back, enjoying every moment of his superiority and his teacher's authority. "Well, er ... about three hundred years later, this classical literary Latin lost its supremacy and was replaced by a popular Latin, and so on, and so forth—anyway, it's not all that important." (Gavrik nodded in agreement.) "The main thing, my friend, is that this very same Latin finally ended up by having twenty letters in the alphabet, and then three more were added to it."

"That makes it twenty-three!" Gavrik put in happily.

"Right. Twenty-three letters in all."

"What are they?"

"Don't rush into Hell before your father!" Petya intoned the Latin master's favourite saying—subconsciously he had been imitating him all the time. "The letters of the Latin alphabet, which you will now write down, are: A, B, C, D...."

Gavrik sat up, licked the tip of his pencil, and began copying the Latin letters gracefully.

"Wait a minute, silly, what are you doing? Write a Latin 'B,' not a Russian one."

"What's the Latin one like?"

"The same as the Russian 'V.' Understand?"

"I'm not that dumb!"

"Erase what you've written and correct it."

Gavrik pulled a little piece of an "Elephant" India rubber carefully wrapped up in a scrap of paper from one of the pockets of his wide corduroy breeches, rubbed the elephant's backside vigorously over the Russian letter, and wrote the Latin "B" in its place.

"Tell you what," Petya said—he was beginning to feel quite bored with it all—"you just keep on copying the Latin letters from the book, land I'll stretch my legs meanwhile."

Gavrik copied diligently, and Petya began to stretch his legs, that is, he began to walk back and forth with his hands clasped behind him until, finally, he came

to a stop before the dining-room sideboard. It is a well-known fact that all sideboards have a special magnetism where boys are concerned, and it rarely happens that a boy passes a sideboard without peeping in to see what it contains. Petya was no exception, the more so since Auntie had been careless enough to say:

"... And keep away from the sideboard."

Petya knew perfectly well that she had in mind the large jar of strawberry jam which his grandmother in Yekaterinoslav had sent them for Christmas. They had not opened it yet, although it was meant for the holidays, and as the holidays had already passed, Petya felt a bit aggrieved. It was really hard to understand Auntie.

Usually so kind and generous, when it came to jam she became monstrously, inexplicably stingy. One could not even hint at jam in her presence. A terrified look would come into her eyes and she would rattle off:

"No, no! By no means! Don't dare go near it. I'll give it to you when the time comes."

But when that time would come, no one could say. She herself said nothing and simply threw up her hands in alarm at the very idea. Actually, it was all very stupid, for hadn't the jam been made and sent expressly for the purpose of being eaten!

While stretching his legs, Petya opened the sideboard, got up on to a chair and looked on the very top shelf where the heavy jar of Yekaterinoslav jam stood. After admiring it for a while he closed the sideboard and returned to his pupil. Gavrik was labouring away and had already got as far as "N," which he did not know how to write. Petya helped him, praised his penmanship, and noted casually:

"By the way, Grandma sent us a six-pound jar of strawberry jam for Christmas."

"You don't say." '

"Honestly!"

"They don't make jars that big."

"Don't they?" Petya smiled sarcastically

"No, they don't."

"A fat lot *you* know about jars!" Petya mumbled and stalked into the dining-room. When he returned, he gingerly placed the heavy jar on the desk between globe and microscope. "Well, go on, say it's not a six-pounder."

"You win."

Gavrik drew his notebook closer land copied out three more Latin letters: "O," identical with the Russian letter, "P," resembling the Russian "R," and a rather strange-looking one called "Q," which gave him not a little trouble.

"Fine!" Petya exclaimed. He hesitated a moment and added, "What do you say to trying the jam? Want to?"

"I don't mind," Gavrik said. "But what'll Auntie say?"

"We'll just have a spoonful, she won't even notice the difference."

"Petya went to fetch a spoon, then he patiently untied the bow of the tight cord. He carefully raised the top paper, which had taken the shape of a lid and, still more carefully, removed the parchment disk beneath.

The disk had been soaked in rum to keep the jam from spoiling, and directly underneath lay the glossy, placid surface. With the utmost caution Petya and

Gavrik helped themselves to a full spoon each.

The Yekaterinoslav grandmother was a famous jam-maker, and strawberry jam was her pride. But this jam in particular was of unrivalled quality. Never had Petya—to say nothing of Gavrik—tasted anything like it. It was fragrant, thick, and, at the same time, ethereal, full of large transparent berries, tender, choice, deliciously sprinkled all over with tiny yellow seeds, and it just melted in their mouths.

They licked their spoons clean and made the happy discovery that, actually, the quantity of jam in the jar hadn't gone down a bit—the surface was still level with the top. No doubt, some physical law of large and small quantities could well be applied to this particular case: the vast capacity of the jar and the minute capacity of the tea-spoon, but since neither Petya nor Gavrik as yet had any idea of this law, they thought it no less than a miracle that the jam had remained at its former level.

"Exactly as it was," Gavrik said.

"I told you she wouldn't notice it." With these words Petya replaced the first parchment disk, then the paper lid, rewound the cord tightly, made exactly the same kind of bow, returned the jar to the sideboard and placed it on the top shelf.

Meanwhile Gavrik had written out two more letters: "R" and a shaky-looking "S."

"That's fine!" Petya praised him. "By the way, I think we can safely try another spoonful."

"Of what?"

"The jam."

"But what about Auntie?"

"Don't be silly. We left it exactly the same as before. Another spoonful each will still leave as much as there was. Right?"

Gavrik thought about it and agreed. After all, one could not contradict the obvious.

Petya brought in the jar, untied the tight bow painstakingly, carefully removed the paper lid and parchment disk, and admired the glossy surface that shone as before at the very top of the jar; then the two friends had another spoonful each, licked the spoons, and Petya wound the cord around the neck of the jar and retied the bow.

This time the jam seemed doubly delicious and their enjoyment of it twice as fleeting.

"You see, the level hasn't changed!" Petya said triumphantly, as he lifted the jar that was just as heavy as ever.

"I wouldn't say that," Gavrik rejoined. "This time it's sure to be a tiny bit lower. I had a good look at it."

Petya raised the jar and examined it closely.

"Nothing of the sort. It's exactly the same, no change."

"That's what you think," Gavrik said. "You can't notice it because the empty space is hidden by the edges of the paper. Turn back the edge and you'll see."

Petya lifted up the pleated edge of the paper lid and raised the jar to the light. The jar was almost as full as before. Almost, but not quite. There was a space a hair's-breadth wide, but it was a space. This was most unfortunate, although it was doubtful that Auntie would notice it. Petya took the jar into the dining-room

and replaced it on the top shelf.

"Let's see what you've been scribbling," he said with an affected gaiety.

Gavrik scratched his head in silence and sighed.

"What's the matter? Are you tired?"

"No. It's not that. I rather think that she'll notice it, even though only a tiny bit is missing."

"No, she won't."

"I'll bet she will. And you'll be in a fix when she does."

Petya flushed.

"So what! Who cares! After all, Grandma sent it for all of us, and there's no reason why I shouldn't taste it. If a friend comes to study with me, surely I can treat him to strawberry jam? Huh! You know what? I'll bring it in and we'll each have a saucerful. I'm sure Auntie won't say anything. She'll even praise us for being honest and straightforward about it, for not doing it in a sneaky way."

"Do you think we ought to?" Gavrik asked timidly.

"What's to stop us!" Petya exclaimed.

Suiting the action to the word he brought in the jar and, certain that he was doing an honest and honourable deed, measured out two full saucers of the jam.

"That's enough!" he said firmly, tied up the jar, and put it back in the sideboard.

But it was far from being enough. It was only now, after they had each had a saucerful, that the friends began really to appreciate the heavenly jam. Overcome with an overwhelming and irrepressible desire for at least a little more, Petya brought the jar in again, and with a look of grim determination and without even so much as a glance at Gavrik, served out two more helpings. Petya never dreamed that a saucer could hold so much. When he held the jar up to the light, he saw that it was at least a third empty.

Each ate his portion and licked his spoon clean.

"Never tasted anything like it!" Gavrik said as he went back to copying out the letters "T," "U," "V," and "X," experiencing at the same time a burning desire to have at least one more spoonful of the delectable stuff.

"All right," Petya said resolutely, "we'll eat exactly half of it and no more!"

When there was exactly half the jam left, Petya tied the cord for the Last time and carried the jar back to the sideboard, his mind firmly made up not to go near it again. He tried not to think about Auntie.

"Well, have you had enough?" he asked Gavrik with a wan smile.

"More than enough," Gavrik answered, for the sticky sweetness was beginning to give him a sour taste.

Petya felt slightly nauseous himself. Bliss was suddenly turning into something quite the opposite. They no longer wanted even to think about the jam, and yet, strange as it may seem, they could not get it out of their minds. It seemed to be taking revenge on them, creating an insane, unnatural desire for more. It was no use trying to resist the craving. Petya, dazed, returned once more to the dining-room, and the boys began scooping up spoonfuls of the nauseating delicacy, having lost all sense of what they were doing. This was hatred turned to worship, and worship turned to hatred. Their mouths were puckered up from the acid-sweet taste of the jam. Their foreheads were damp. The jam stuck in their protesting throats. But they kept on devouring it as if it were porridge. They were not even eating it, they were struggling with it, destroying it as a mortal

enemy. They came to their senses when only a thin film of jam left on the very bottom of the jar evaded their spoons.

At that moment Petya realized the full meaning of the terrible thing they had done. Like criminals anxious to cover up their tracks, the boys ran into the kitchen and began feverishly to rinse the sticky jar under the tap, remembering, however, to take turns drinking the sweetish, cloudy water.

When they had washed and wiped the jar clean, Petya put it back on the shelf in the sideboard, as if that would somehow remedy the situation. He comforted himself with the foolish hope that perhaps Auntie had already forgotten about Grandma's jam, or that when she would see the clean empty jar she would think they had eaten it long ago. Alas, Petya knew very well that at best his hopes were foolish.

The boys tried not to look at each other as they walked back to the writing-desk and resumed the lesson.

"Where were we?" Petya said weakly, for he could hardly keep from vomiting. "We have twenty of the twenty-three letters. Later on, historically, two more letters were added."

"Which makes twenty-five," Gavrik said, choking down his sugary saliva.

"Quite right. Copy them out."

Just then Vasily Petrovich came in. He was in that sad but peaceful mood that always came over him after a visit to the cemetery. He glanced at the studious boys, and noticing the strange expression of ill-concealed disgust on their faces, he said:

"I see you are working on the Sabbath, my dear sirs. Having a hard time? Never mind! The root of learning may be bitter, but its fruits are sweet."

With these words he tiptoed over to the icons, took from his pocket the small bottle of wood-oil he had bought in the church shop and carefully filled the icon-lamp, a task he performed every Sunday.

Soon Auntie returned and was followed by Dunyasha. Pavlik was still downstairs. They heard the samovar singing in the kitchen. The delicate tinkle of the china tea-set drifted in from the dining-room.

"I'd better be going," Gavrik said, putting his things together quickly. "I'll finish the other letters at home. So long. See you next Sunday!" With a solemn look on his face he ambled through the dining-room, past the sideboard and into the hall.

"Where are you going?" Auntie asked. "Won't you stay to tea?"

"Thanks, Tatyana Ivanovna, they're waiting for me at home. I've a couple of chores to do yet."

"You're sure you won't stay? We've got nice strawberry jam. H'm?"

"Oh no, no!" Gavrik exclaimed in alarm. In the hall he whispered to Petya, "I owe you 50 kopeks," and dashed down the stairs to escape from the scene of the crime.

"You're not looking well," Auntie said as she turned to Petya. "You look as if you had tainted sausage. Maybe you're going to be ill. Let's see your tongue."

Petya hung his head dejectedly and stuck out a marvellously pink tongue.

"Aha! I know what it is!" Auntie cried. "It's all because of that Latin. You see, my dear, how difficult it is to be a tutor! Never mind, we'll open Grandma's jam in honour of your first lesson and you'll be your old self again in no time."

With these words Auntie walked over to the sideboard, while Petya lay down

on his bed with a groan and stuck his head under the pillow so as not to hear or see anything.

However, at the very moment that Auntie was gazing in astonishment at the clean empty jar and trying to puzzle out why it was there and how it had got into the sideboard, Pavlik rushed into the hall, yelling at the top of his lungs:

"Faig, Faig! Listen! Faig has driven up to our house in his carriage!"

MR. FAIG

They all rushed to the windows, including Petya, who had tossed aside his pillow. True enough, Faig's carriage was at the front gate.

Mr. Faig was one of the best-known citizens in town.

He was as popular as Governor Tolmachov, as Maryiashek, the town idiot, as Mayor Pelican who achieved fame by stealing a chandelier from the theatre, as Ratur-Ruter, the editor-publisher, who was often thrashed in public for his slanderous articles, as Kochubei, the owner of the largest ice-cream parlour, the source of wholesale food-poisoning every summer, and, finally, as brave old General Radetsky, the hero of Plevna.

Faig, a Jew who had turned Christian, was a man of great wealth, the owner and head of an accredited commercial school. His school was a haven for those young men of means who had been expelled for denseness and bad behaviour from other schools in Odessa and elsewhere in the Russian Empire. By paying the appropriate fee one could always graduate and receive a school-leaving certificate at Faig's school. Faig was a philanthropist and patron of the Arts. He enjoyed making donations and did so with a splash, including an announcement in the papers.

He donated suites of furniture and cows to lotteries, contributed large sums towards improving the cathedral and buying a new bell, he established the Faig Prize to be awarded annually at the yacht races, and paid fifty rubles for a glass of champagne at charity bazaars. In short, this Faig, who had become a legend, was the horn of plenty that poured charity upon the poor.

However, the main source of his popularity lay in the fact that he rode around town in his own carriage.

This was no antediluvian contraption of the type that usually bumped along as part of the funeral cortege. Neither was it a wedding carriage, upholstered in white satin with crystal headlights and folding step. Nor was it a bishop's carriage, that screeching conveyance which, in addition to carrying the bishop, was also used for transporting to private homes the Icon of the Holy Virgin of Kasperovka associated with Kutuzov and the fall of Ochakov. Faig's carriage was a coupe *de luxe* on English springs, with high box and a coachman dressed according to the height of English fashion. The doors sported a fictitious coat-of-arms, and, as a finishing touch. a liveried footman stood on the footboard, which reduced the street loafers to a state approaching religious ecstasy.

A pair of bob-tailed horses with patent-leather blinkers whisked the carriage along at la brisk trot. Faig was inside. He was wearing a top hat and a Palmerston coat, his side whiskers were dyed black, and a Havana was planted

between his teeth. His feet were wrapped in a Scotch plaid.

While the Bachei family was watching Faig's carriage from the windows and wondering whom he might have come to see, the door-bell rang. Dunyasha opened the door and nearly swooned. The liveried footman stood before her with his three-cornered purled hat pressed to his breast.

"Mr. Faig presents his respects to the Bachei family," the footman said, "and asks to be received."

The Bachei family, who had rushed into the hall, stood there dumbfounded. Auntie was the only one who had kept a level head. She gave Vasily Petrovich a meaning look, turned to the footman, and with a polite smile and in an offhand manner said, "Please ask him up."

The footman bowed and went downstairs, sweeping the stairway with the long tails of his livery coat.

No sooner had Vasily Petrovich fastened his collar, adjusted his tie, and got his arms through the sleeves of his good frock-coat, than Mr. Faig entered. He carried his top hat, his gloves tossed into it, stiffly in one hand and in the other, which sparkled with the diamonds, he held a cigar. A democratic smile lit up his face between the black side whiskers. He spread the aroma of Havana cigar smoke mixed with the scent of Atkinson's perfume. A battery of badges, medals, and fraternity-pins followed the cut of his frock-coat. Tiny pearls glowed gently in the buttonholes of his magnificently starched white shirt-front.

This man, the personification of success and wealth, had suddenly paid them a call! Faig put his top hat on the hall table and extended his plump hand to Father in the grand manner. That was all Petya saw, for Auntie manoeuvred him and Pavlik into the kitchen and kept them there until Mr. Faig departed.

Judging by the fact that Faig's loud and merry laughter and Father's chuckle were heard several times, the visit was a friendly one. But what could be the reason for it? The explanation was forthcoming when Faig, after being helped into the carriage by the footman and having the Scotch plaid tucked round his legs, waved his white hand with the cigar and drove off. He had come to Vasily Petrovich with the offer of a teaching appointment in his establishment.

It had all been so unexpected and so much like a miracle, that Vasily Petrovich turned to the icon and crossed himself. Teaching in Faig's school was much more remunerative than in the gymnasium, because Faig paid his teachers almost double the salary paid by the government. Vasily Petrovich was captivated by Faig's matter-of-fact way, his cordiality and democratic manners which contrasted so pleasantly and unexpectedly with his appearance and his way of life.

In conversation with Vasily Petrovich, Faig displayed a keen understanding of contemporary affairs. He was biting and yet restrained when criticizing the Ministry of Education for its inability to appreciate its best teachers; he fiercely resented the government's attempts to turn the schools into military barracks and openly declared that the time had come for society to take the matter of public education into its own hands and banish servile officials and petty tyrants such as the head of the Odessa District Education Department, who had revived the worst traditions of the Arakcheyev times. He declared that their attitude towards Vasily Petrovich, in addition to lacking any justification, had been disgusting, and that he hoped to right the wrong and restore justice, as he considered the matter his sacred duty to Russian society and science. He hoped that in his

establishment Vasily Petrovich would find full scope for" his abilities as a brilliant teacher and for his love of the great Russian literature. As a believer in European methods of education he was sure that he and Vasily Petrovich would understand one another. As for the formalities, he did not doubt for a minute that he would get the consent of the Minister of Education to have Vasily Petrovich officially accredited, since a public gymnasium was one thing, and a private school something else again. Nor did Faig conceal the fact that one of the reasons which had prompted him to engage Vasily Petrovich was that by so doing he would raise the standard of the school in the eyes of the liberal circles of Odessa society; another was that it would be a challenge to the government, since, according to Faig, Vasily Petrovich's famous speech on the occasion of Tolstoi's death had won him a definite political reputation.

All this was strange and flattering to Vasily Petrovich, although he winced at the mention of his political reputation. And when Faig added, "You shall be our standard-bearer," Vasily Petrovich even felt a little frightened. However, Faig's proposition was accepted, and life in the Bachei family underwent a miraculous change.

Faig had paid Vasily Petrovich for six months in advance. The sum was larger than the family had ever dreamed of. Now, whenever Vasily Petrovich ventured forth, the neighbours watched him enviously from their windows and said:

"Look, there goes Bachei, the one Faig has taken on."

Once again Vasily Petrovich began to think in terms of a trip abroad. And at long last, after weighing up his resources and consulting Auntie for the twentieth time, he decided: we're going!

THE SAILOR'S OUTFIT

Spring, which came early, was warm and glorious. Easter passed and left pleasant memories. Soon it was examination time, a time Petya always associated with the brief May thunderstorms, fiery flashes of purple lightning, the lilac in bloom in the school garden, the dry air of the empty class-rooms with the desks moved close together and the clouds of chalk dust, pierced by the warm rays of the afternoon sun that remained suspended in the air after the last exam.

They began preparing for the trip during examination time. Switzerland, a country that had always had a special place in Vasily Petrovich's heart, was their main objective. However, it was decided that they should first go to Naples by sea, and then cross Italy by rail. This indirect route would be slightly more expensive, but it would give them the chance to visit Turkey, Greece, the islands of the Aegean Sea and Sicily, they would be able to see all the sights of Naples, Rome, Florence, and Venice; then, funds permitting, they might even pay a brief visit to Paris. Vasily Petrovich had mapped out the itinerary many years before, when Mother had still been alive. The two-of them had spent many an evening leafing through travel guides and writing down the travel expenses. They had noted the price of the tickets, hotel and boarding-house rates, and even admission prices to museums and tips were included in their careful calculations.

Despite all this Vasily Petrovich feared to overtax the budget, and so he studied the rail and steamer ticket prices once more.

There were many arguments about what to take and how to pack. Auntie suggested that they should buy two very ordinary suitcases and put very ordinary clothes in them. However, it turned out that Vasily Petrovich was of another mind completely. He thought they should have a special satchel and Alpine rucksacks with special straps that would not interfere with climbing.

Auntie shrugged and laughed, but Petya and Pavlik insisted that only the special Alpine rucksacks be ordered, and so she gave in. Vasily Petrovich went to the shop with his own draft of the special travelling-bag and the special rucksacks. A few days later the Bachei household was richer by two rucksacks and a rather strange-looking creation of the luggage-and-harness industry. It was of tartan and bore a vague resemblance to a huge accordion, covered all over with a multitude of patch-pockets.

These new and still empty travelling-bags and the exciting smell of leather and dyed material brought visions of far distances into the household. Then they

discovered that the boys could not go abroad in their school uniforms, they would have to wear "civvies."

That was no problem as far as Pavlik was concerned. He still had last year's "pre-school" clothes: a pair of short trousers and a middy-blouse. Petya's outfit presented a problem. It would have been ridiculous to deck a fourteen-year-old boy out in a grown man's suit with a coat, waistcoat and a tie. But a little boy's outfit with short trousers was no good either. They had to find a happy medium. Petya was already in a frenzy of impatience and the outfit he wanted was undoubtedly influenced by the illustrations in the works of Jules Verne and Mayne Reid. In his opinion it had to be something like 'a naval cadet's uniform, consisting of his long school trousers and a navy-blue blouse, not the kind that little boys wear, but the real thing, made of heavy flannel.

It was no easy matter to have such a blouse made. No children's outfitter and no tailor seemed to understand what was expected of them. Petya, who had already pictured himself as a naval cadet, was desperate. Gavrik came to his rescue. He suggested a naval outfitter's shop where he knew someone. He seemed to have friends everywhere!

The shop was located in the so-called Sabansky Barracks, an ancient white-columned structure.

The enclosed yard, vast and spacious, and the ominous appearance of the disused fortress, the pyramids of old cannon-balls, anchors, parallel bars, and the mast with its multi-coloured signal flags, thrilled Petya. An orderly in a sailor's cap sat on a bench beneath a bell.

"Don't worry," Gavrik said, seeing that Petya had stopped in confusion. "The fellows here are good chaps." They climbed up the worn steps of an ancient stairway and found themselves in a dark corridor. It was as cold as a crypt, and the change was especially noticeable later the noonday heat of the May sunshine.

Gavrik confidently led his friend through the darkness to a door, and the boys entered a deep-vaulted room. The walls were twelve feet thick, so that the two little windows barely let in any light, although they 'directly faced the sea opposite Quarantine Bay and the white lighthouse with its circling sea-gulls that stood out so clearly against the choppy blue-green water.

A sailor wearing the red shoulder-straps of the coastguard service sat at a large sewing-machine, working the iron treadle with his bare feet as he hemmed a woollen signal flag. A heap of signal flags lay in a corner.

The sailor stopped sewing when he saw Gavrik. A smile broke over his pock-marked face, but then he noticed the strange boy standing behind Gavrik and raised his bushy eyebrows inquiringly.

"It's all right. This is the fellow who's teaching me Latin," Gavrik said, and Petya realized that the sailor knew all about his friend.

"What's new?" the sailor asked.

"Nothing special," Gavrik answered. "I've come about something else this time. I was wondering whether you could make a regulation sailor's blouse for this fellow."

"I haven't got the right material."

"He's got it. Petya, show him the cloth."

Petya handed over the package. The sailor unrolled the soft, fine, strong navy-blue wool.

"That's the real stuff!" Gavrik said with a touch of pride.

"How much did you pay for it?" the sailor asked.

Petya told him the price and he felt sure the meaning look that the sailor gave Gavrik was disapproving.

"Don't go thinking things," Gavrik said. "His old man's just a teacher. They're not well off. They're even hard up for money at times. It so happens that he needs a regulation blouse."

Gavrik amazed Petya as he explained why he needed the blouse. He had all the details of the projected journey at his fingertips. Petya caught several significant glances passing between Gavrik and the sailor.

Perhaps he would not have paid any attention to this, were it not for the fact that something similar had taken place when he was giving Gavrik a Latin lesson in Near Mills. Motya had been present during the lesson, and since Motya regarded Petya as some kind of superior being, an object of devoted and secret worship, he began to boast for her benefit. His imagination ran away with him as he described the forthcoming journey. When he got as far as the splendours of Switzerland Terenty exchanged glances with Gavrik and then with his guest, Sinichkin, a thin, consumptive worker wearing top boots and a black cotton shirt beneath a threadbare jacket.

When Terenty looked sat him, Sinichkin shook his head and muttered, "No, he's no longer there," or something to that effect. Suddenly, he looked Petya straight in the eye and asked him solemnly:

"Will you be going to France, too? Will you visit Paris?"

And when Petya answered that if their money held out they would certainly go there, Sinichkin looked at Terenty significantly again, but they did not ask Petya any more questions.

Petya felt that his forthcoming trip abroad had evoked in Gavrik and his friends in Near Mills some kind of special interest, but he was in the dark as to the reason why.

The sailor and Gavrik had exchanged the same sort of glances too. Perhaps, Petya thought, people always behaved like that in the presence of someone about to go abroad. Petya had not yet set foot outside his native city, but he already felt that new experiences awaited him around every corner. He would suddenly find himself in a side-street he had never trod before and would stop to look at a tiled house or a garden with the curious eyes of a tourist.

How many times, for example, had he passed the Sabansky Barracks and never dreamed that behind its gates was an unknown world—a sleepy, deserted yard with anchors and cannon-balls, a naval outfitter's shop where a sailor sewed woollen signal flags, ancient windows in deep niches from which the sea seemed altogether different and unfamiliar, luring one to explore far-off lands.

The sailor examined the cloth and praised it. He would make the blouse, but his charge would be five rubles. Gavrik shoved Petya aside, looked hard at the sailor, shook his head reproachfully, and said that one ruble would be far too much. They bargained a long time, and finally the sailor said he would do the job for two rubles, and only because Petya was "one of us." What this meant Petya did not understand.

The sailor then wiped the lid of a large sea chest with his sleeve, said, "Sit down, boys," and went to fetch a copper kettle of boiling water. They drank tea from tin mugs, sucking lumps of sugar and eating tasty rye bread that the sailor cut off in large slices, pressing the loaf to his brawny chest.

Gavrik and the sailor kept up a grave conversation over tea, and, judging by what was said, Petya concluded that the sailor—Gavrik called him "Uncle Fedya"—knew Terenty's family well and was actually a distant relative on his mother's side. The conversation was mostly about family and money matters. However, from certain hints and veiled expressions, Petya divined that there was another bond between Terenty and Uncle Fedya. Petya could not quite get the hang of it, but he vaguely felt a long-forgotten echo of the terrible and troubled air of 1905.

At last Uncle Fedya pulled out a decrepit oilcloth tape-measure with the numbers all worn off, measured Petya, and promised to have the blouse ready in three days. He was as good as his word. In addition, he made a sailor's cap for the boy with the left-over cloth, and attached an old St. George ribbon with long ends to it. The cap was free of charge.

Petya had a look at himself in the crooked little mirror that hung on the wall next to a coloured print of Taras Shevchenko and could not hold back the happy, radiant smile that spread across his face all the way to his ears.

DEPARTURE

Unexpected complications set in when they applied to the chief of police for travel passports. Vasily Petrovich had to submit written statements testifying to his loyalty to the state. This was not as easy as it seemed. He filled out the application forms, and four days later an officer from the Alexandrovsky police-station knocked at the door with two witnesses in order to proceed with the inquiry. The mere mention of the word "inquiry" irritated Vasily Petrovich. And when the inquisitor plumped into a chair in the dining-room where he spread his greasy folders and put down a spill-proof ink-well on the clean table-cloth, and in an official tone asked all kinds of stupid questions about sex, age, religious affiliation, rank, title, etc., Vasily Petrovich felt like throwing him out; but he controlled himself and endured the grilling. He signed his name to the inquiry paper, next to the illegible scrawl of janitor Akimov, one of the witnesses, and the flourishing signature of the other witness, an insipid, pimply young man in a technical-school cap with two crossed hammers over the peak.

Soon afterwards a policeman came with a notice requesting Vasily Petrovich to appear before the chief of police. Vasily Petrovich duly appeared and had a talk with the chief in his office. They discussed a variety of subjects, mostly political, and Vasily Petrovich explained why he had left his job with the Ministry of Education. They parted on amiable terms.

But that was not all. Vasily Petrovich had to submit a mountain of documents: his service record, birth certificate, his wife's death certificate, etc., etc. This took much time and energy and caused endless frustration. All the copies had to be letter-perfect before they could be notarised. Petya tagged along with his father on this dreary roundabout.

How unbearable were those typing bureaus where sour and arrogant old maids in squeaking corsets would get up from behind their Underwoods and Remingtons, haughtily survey Vasily Petrovich and rudely announce that nothing could be done before another week! How tired they were of the stifling, deserted summer streets, criss-crossed by the latticed shadows of the blossoming white acacias and the notaries' oval signboards with their black, two-headed eagles!

When all the copies were duly prepared and notarized, it turned out that there would have to be yet another inquiry.

Time was passing and there were moments when Vasily Petrovich felt so frustrated that he was ready to abandon the idea of going abroad. But Gavrik saved the situation once more.

"You're green!" he said to Petya, shrugging his shoulders. "You're a bunch of innocents. Tell your old man to grease their palms."

"What, bribe them? Never!" Vasily Petrovich thundered when Petya passed on his friend's advice. "I'll never sink that low!"

But in the end, completely exasperated by red tape, he did sink that low. And behold, everything changed as if by magic: a certificate of his loyalty was produced in an instant, and the hitherto unattainable travel passport was delivered to the house.

They had only to book their tickets and set out. Since they had decided to travel on an Italian ship, there was something thrilling and foreign even in the matter of purchasing the tickets. In Lloyd's Travel Agency on Nikolayevsky Boulevard, next door to the Vorontsov Palace—that is, in the most fashionable part of the town—the prospective tourists were greeted with such reverence and politeness that Petya thought his father had been mistaken for someone else.

A gentleman in a grey morning coat with a large pearl tie-pin stuck in a brilliantly coloured tie asked them to sit down in the deep leather chairs which stood around a small mahogany table. The surface of the table, polished to a high gloss, was littered with Lloyd's narrow, illustrated prospectuses in various languages. There were photographs of many-storeyed hotels, palm-trees, ancient ruins and ocean liners. Petya saw tiny white Remus and Romulus at the jagged tits of the white she-wolf, St. Mark's winged lion, Vesuvius with an umbrella-like Italian pine in the foreground, Milan Cathedral, as thin and pointed as a fish-bone, and the leaning Tower of Pisa; these symbols of Italian cities transported the boy into the realms of foreign travel.

Undoubtedly, the Travel Agency office belonged to that world too, with its flamboyant posters, price-lists, impressive rosewood filing cabinets and counters, ship chronometers instead of ordinary clocks, models of ships in glass cases, portraits of the King and Queen of Italy, and the gallant gentleman in the grey morning coat, who chattered away in broken Russian while selling Vasily Petrovich the pretty second-class tickets from Odessa to Naples and patting Pavlik, whom he called "leetle signor turisto," on his close-cropped head.

From then on Petya felt that the journey had begun.

When the tickets were handed to them, together with a sheaf of guides and prospectuses, and when, in a high state of excitement, they emerged from Lloyd's, Petya regarded Nikolayevsky Boulevard as the marine embankment of some foreign city, and the familiar Richelieu monument with the iron bomb on the pedestal as one of the "sights" which was now to be thoroughly "inspected," not merely looked at. This feeling was heightened by the ships of every flag that lay at anchor in the bay far below the boulevard.

The day of departure arrived.

Their ship was scheduled to sail at four in the afternoon. At one-thirty Dunyasha was sent to hire two cabs. Auntie, in a mantilla and a little hat with daisies, was seeing them off. She and a speechless, excited Pavlik climbed into one cab; Vasily Petrovich and Petya, with the Alpine rucksacks and the tartan travelling-bag packed so tight that it was ready to burst, got into the other.

A group of idlers stood around discussing the event in loud voices. Dunyasha, wearing her new calico dress, wiped her tears with her apron. Vasily Petrovich patted the pockets of his freshly-ironed silk jacket to make sure he had not forgotten anything, removed his black-banded straw hat, crossed himself,

and said with a show of nonchalance:

"Well, let's be off!"

The crowd parted, the cabs set off, and Dunyasha began to weep aloud.

Petya's feeling that they were already abroad never left him. To get to the port they had to cross the city through the rich business centre. Then only did Petya realize how greatly Odessa had changed in the past few years. The typical provincial nature of this southern city had remained unchanged on the outskirts. There one could still find the small lime-stone houses with tiled roofs, the walnut and mulberry trees in the yards, the bright-green booths of the soft-drinks vendors, Greek coffee-houses, tobacco shops, and wine cellars with a white lamp in the shape of a bunch of grapes over the entrance.

The spirit of European capitalism reigned in the town centre. There were black glass signs with impressive gold lettering in every European language at the entrance to the banks and company offices. There were highly-priced luxury goods in the windows of the English and French shops. Linotypes clattered and rotary presses whirred in the semi-basements occupied by newspaper print-shops. As they were crossing Greek Street the drivers pulled up in terror to give way to a new and shiny electric tram-car, emitting cascades of sparks. This was the city's first tramway-line, built by a Belgian company, connecting the centre with the Industry and Trade Fair that had just opened on wasteland near Alexandrovsky Park.

At the corner of Langeron and Yekaterininskaya streets, directly opposite the huge Fankoni Cafe where stockbrokers and grain merchants in Panama hats sat at marble-topped tables set out right on the pavement, Paris-style, under awnings and surrounded by potted laurel trees, the cab in which Auntie and Pavlik were travelling was all but overturned by a bright-red automobile driven by the heir to the famous Ptashnikov Bros, firm, a grotesquely bloated young man in a tiny yachting cap, who looked amazingly like a prize Yorkshire pig.

The spirit of "European capitalism" disappeared when they began the downhill ride to the port and passed the dives, doss-houses, second-hand shops, and the dead-end lanes where tramps and down-and-outs, pale-faced and ragged, were playing cards or sleeping on the bare ground. However, the spirit reappeared when they approached the warehouses, commercial agencies, the stacks of crates and sacks that were like a city, with streets and alleys, and, finally, the ships of many nations and companies.

The embarkation officer told the drivers where their ship, the *Palermo,* was being loaded, and they headed for the wharf. They stopped opposite a large ship gaily flying the Italian flag, and the boys were most disappointed to find that she had only one funnel.

As might have been expected, they arrived far too early and had nearly an hour and a half till sailing time. Loading was in full swing. The arms of powerful steam winches swung to and fro, lowering bunches of barrels strapped together and crates that must have weighed a ton into the hold. Passengers were not allowed on board as yet—not that any were in sight, with the exception of a group of turbaned Turks or Persians, deck passengers, who were sitting silently and sullenly on their rug-wrapped belongings.

THE LETTER

Suddenly Petya saw Gavrik coming towards him, swinging a spray of white acacia. Petya could hardly believe his eyes. Had he come to see them off? It was not at all like Gavrik to do a thing like that.

"What made you come here?" Petya asked. "I've come to see you off," Gavrik answered and the nonchalant gesture as he handed Petya the acacia was magnificent.

"Are you crazy?" Petya felt very embarrassed. "No," Gavrik said. "What is it then?"

"I'm your pupil, you're my teacher. And Terenty says that we should respect our teachers. Isn't that right?" There was a quizzical twinkle in Gavrik's smiling eyes. "Stop fooling."

"I'm not fooling," Gavrik said. And taking Petya by the arm, he said in a very serious voice, "I want a word with you. Let's take a walk."

They strolled down the pier, through the flocks of lazy pigeons that kept pecking away at kernels of maize. At the end of the pier they sat down on a huge anchor. Gavrik looked around, and when he had made sure that there was no one within earshot, he said, as if continuing an interrupted conversation:

"Look here. I'll give you a letter, which you must stow away safely. When you reach a foreign country, stamp it and drop it in a letter-box. But not in Turkey, because they belong to the same gang. Post it in Italy or Switzerland, or, best of all, France. Will you do this for us?"

Petya stared at Gavrik in amazement, wondering whether he was joking or serious. However, he had such a serious look about him that there could be no doubt.

"Of course I'll do it," Petya said and shrugged.

"Where will you get the money for the stamp?" Gavrik queried.

"Don't worry. We'll be writing to Auntie all the time. That'll be easy enough."

"I can give you the twenty kopeks for the stamp, maybe you can exchange it there for their kind of money."

Petya smiled.

"Listen, none of that," Gavrik said severely. "And remember, it's very important... er ... well." He wanted to say "Party business," but did not. He tried to think of an appropriate word, but could not, and could only wag an ink-stained finger significantly in front of Petya's nose.

"I understand," Petya nodded solemnly.

"It's a personal request from Terenty," Gavrik said after a moment's silence, as if to explain the importance of the matter. "Do you get me?"

"Yes," Petya answered.

Gavrik looked around once more and took the letter out of his pocket. It was wrapped in newspaper to keep it from getting soiled.

"Where can I hide it?"

"Right here."

Gavrik took off Petya's sailor's cap and pushed the letter carefully under the lining at the place where one of the seams had not been stitched.

Petya was just about to say that Uncle Fedya had done a pretty sloppy job on the cap, but at that moment a long shrill whistle drowned out all the sounds of the port for fully a minute. Then, abruptly, it stopped, as if it had flown across the city and disappeared into the steppe beyond. The second blow was a brief one, like a period at the end of la long sentence. Petya saw the passengers going up the gangway. Gavrik clapped Petya's cap on again, adjusted the ribbons and the two ran towards the ship.

"There's just one more thing," Gavrik said hurriedly as they raced along, "if they discover the letter, say you found it, but the best thing, if you have time, would be to tear it up and get rid of it, although there's nothing very special in it. So don't be soared."

"I know, I know," Petya answered in a jumpy voice.

"Petya!" Vasily Petrovich, Pavlik and Auntie were shouting together, in varying stages of despair, as they fussed around the Alpine rucksacks and travelling-bag.

"You dreadful child!" Father was boiling. "You'll be the death of me!"

"Where have you been? What a thing to do! To disappear just as the first whistle was blowing!" Auntie was saying excitedly, addressing herself to Petya and the other passengers, who were arriving in crowds.

"We nearly left without you!" Pavlik bellowed at the top of his lungs.

A sailor picked up their things. They followed him up the gangway over the mysterious gap between the side of the ship and the harbour wall where far below the green water glistened dully and a small transparent jellyfish bobbed on the surface. The captain's mate, an Italian, took their tickets, and a Russian coastguard officer took Vasily Petrovich's passport. Petya was positive that the officer eyed his sailor's cap with obvious suspicion.

They went down a steep ladder into the bowels of the ship, each of them tripping over the high copper coaming, Electric lights burned dimly in the day-time darkness of the corridors, and when walking on the coconut mats and cork flooring they were conscious that the ship, which was still moored to the pier, had a fairly strong list.

A middle-aged Italian stewardess unlocked the door and the sailor dumped their bags in the small cabin. The sea was dazzlingly reflected on the porthole side of the very low creamy-white ceiling.

While they were putting their things in the luggage nets, bumping into one another in the process, the siren blew a second blast—a long one—followed by two short ones.

When, at long last, after getting lost in the maze of corridors and stumbling painfully over the high coamings, they found their way up to one of the decks, the steam winches were no longer rattling, the long arms of the cranes were

motionless, and the only sound breaking in the sunny stillness was the hiss of escaping steam.

Auntie and Gavrik were part of the small crowd gathered on the pier to see the ship off. When Gavrik spotted Petya, he shook his fist at him stealthily and winked. Petya knew exactly what he meant. He fixed his cap casually and shouted:

"Don't forget your Latin revision!"

"I know it!" Gavrik shouted back, cupping his hands to his mouth. *"Hie, haec, hoc!* How's that?"

"Correct!"

"There you are!"

"Don't forget: I'll question you on the whole course when I get back!"

Then came that disconcerting pause that always precedes the third whistle, when neither those on board nor those on the pier know what to say or do. Auntie was rummaging in her bag for her handkerchief in order to start waving it at any moment. Gavrik kept his eyes on Petya's cap.

"You might as well go, there's no sense standing about here," Vasily Petrovich said to Auntie as he leaned over the rail.

"What? What did you say?" Auntie asked, holding her hand to her ear.

"I said you might as well go home!" Vasily Petrovich shouted.

But Auntie shook her head so vigorously that it would seem her one duty in life was to stay there to the very end.

"Duckie dear," she shouted to Pavlik through her tears, "it'll be cold at sea. You had better go put on your coat."

Pavlik winced and walked away independently, so that none of the passengers would think he was "duckie dear." "Duckie dear, put on your woollen stockings!" There was no stopping Auntie now.

Pavlik had to assume a very casual expression again, to show that none of this had anything to do with him, although to tell the truth his heart was heavy at the prospect of parting with Auntie.

The blast of the third whistle shattered the air over the ship. With a feeling of relief the crowd on 'board and the crowd on the pier began to wave handkerchiefs, hats, and umbrellas. However, they were a little premature, the ship still remained at her berth.

The captain's mate, the coastguard officer and a group of soldiers with green shoulder-straps appeared on deck again. The officer began to return the passengers' passports. Just then Petya noticed a strangely familiar-looking man standing behind the officer. He was la shabby individual in a straw hat and there was something sad and dog-like about his eyes. As he slowly scrutinized the passengers he raised a dark pince-nez to his fleshy nose. At that moment Petya recognized Moustache—the same moustached sleuth who had chased seaman Zhukov all over the decks of the *Turgenev* five years before.

At that moment the sleuth looked at Petya, and their eyes met. There was no way of telling whether he had recognized the boy or not, but he immediately turned round to the officer and whispered something in his ear.

Petya felt a chill run down his spine. The officer, holding a stack of passports in his hand as he walked over to Vasily Petrovich and jerking his chin at Petya, barked:

"Your son?"

"Yes."

"Then kindly remove the St. George ribbon from his cap. If you do not, I will be forced to escort you ashore and take up the matter of your son's unauthorized wearing of military uniform. It's against the law at home and even more so abroad."

"Petya, take the ribbon off this minute!"

"Here's your passport. I'll see to the ribbon. You can claim it in the commandant's office when you return."

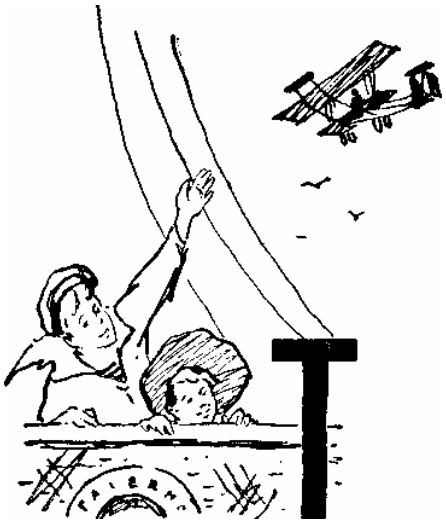
Gavrik, watching from the pier, saw the officer and soldiers surround Petya. Petya removed his cap.

"Run! Petya, run!" he yelled land made a frantic dash for the gangway, but he immediately realized his mistake when he saw that Petya merely removed the ribbon and gave it to the officer, after which he put his cap on his head again as if nothing had happened.

Gavrik looked round anxiously, but no one had paid any attention to his yelling. They were all busy waving good-bye.

The officer handed out the passports, saluted and walked down the gangway, followed by his soldiers and Moustache. A brisk command was shouted in Italian, and the gangway was pulled up. Italian sailors in blue jerseys ran along the side, nimbly taking in the mooring-lines; there was a jerky, insistent ringing of the engine-room telegraph, the red blades of the propeller revolved, churning up the water beneath the gold lettering which spelled: *Palermo.* The deck straightened itself, the ship shuddered, and Petya saw the pier, its structures, the stacks of goods, and the crowd of waving people move now forward, now backward, and then, in some mysterious way, turn up now at one rail, now at the other, only much smaller. Everything on shore began to recede and diminish, as if carried away by the wide stream of foamy green water seething beneath the stern.

Petya could hardly distinguish Gavrik and Auntie, who was waving her umbrella. The panorama of the city began to rise slowly from behind the port structures. There was Nikolayevsky Boulevard, the white columns of the Vorontsov Palace rising on the cliff, the City Hall, and the tiny Duc de Richelieu pointing his outstretched arm away to the horizon.



ON BOARD

They passed the breakwater and saw its other side, the one that faced the open sea. A multitude of fishermen with long bamboo fishing-rods were darting through the spray and foam of the breaking waves.

They could see Langeron, Alexandrovsky Park and the remains of its famous arched wall and next to it the Industry and Trade Fair. This was a township of fancy pavilions, the most prominent of which were the huge three-storey wooden samovar of the Caravan Tea Company and the gold-tipped black champagne bottle of the Rederer Company.

A symphony orchestra was playing at the Fair, and the breeze that billowed the hundreds of coloured flags and pennants on the white flagstaffs brought to Petya's ears snatches of violin crescendos, gently muted by the distance.

Petya remained on deck, fascinated by the sight of the ship entering the open sea. His only regret was that his St. George ribbon had been left behind in the officer's pocket. The wind was getting stronger, it whipped the Italian flag at the stern, and Petya thought wistfully of the long ends of his St. George ribbon which might have been streaming in the wind.

The fresh sea breeze was already ruffling his blouse. It caught at its collar, it billowed it out on his back and puffed out the wide sleeves that were fastened tightly at the wrists. Perhaps it was even nicer to have a ciap without a ribbon, for now, by a slight stretch of imagination, it could be taken for the beret of the Boy Captain, the hero of Jules Verne's famous book, with the .added advantage that there was la letter under its lining.

It was almost as if fate had decided to make this an even more memorable day for Petya and it presented him with another unforgettable impression.

"Look, look! He's flying!" Pavlik shouted.

"Who's flying? Where?"

"There, it's Utochkin!"

It had completely slipped Petya's mind that this was the day of Utochkin's long-awaited flight from Odessa to Dofinovka. The fearless aviator had been waiting for good flying weather to take off from the Fair grounds in his Farman, fly eleven miles straight across the bay, and land in Dofinovka. It was not every boy that had the luck to see this spectacle, not from the shore, but from the sea.

Petya and the passengers who poured out of their cabins saw Utochkin's plane flying low over the water. It had just taken off and was now approaching the ship. It flew so close to the stern that the rays of the setting sun caught at the clearly visible bicycle wheels of the flying machine, the copper fuel tank, and the

bent figure of the pilot, his feet dangling as he sat between the semi-transparent yellow wings.

As he came abreast of the ship the daredevil aviator doffed his leather helmet and waved.

"Hurrah!" Petya yelled and was ready to pull his cap off too, but suddenly remembering the letter, clapped it on tighter instead.

"Hurrah!" the passengers shouted as they waved frantically. The flying machine was getting smaller as it headed towards Dofinovka, a stream of blue petrol smoke trailing in its wake.

Up till then Petya's travels had consisted of two visits to Grandma at Yekaterinoslav and their yearly trips to Budaki, on the sea-shore near Akkerman, where they spent their summer holidays. They made the journey to Yekaterinoslav by train, and travelled to Akkerman by sea on the *Turgenev,* which they considered the latest thing in technical wonders. Now they were sailing from Odessa to Naples on an ocean liner. To tell the truth, the *Palermo* wasn't that at all. But, since she had made several transatlantic voyages, Petya, by a slight stretch of imagination, convinced himself and tried hard to convince the others that the *Palermo* was really an ocean liner.

The journey was to take two weeks, which seemed quite a long time for such a swift ship as the prospectuses and advertisements would have one believe she was.

The point was that when the signer in the grey morning coat sold the steamship tickets to Vasily Petrovich he innocently failed to mention that the *Palermo* was not exactly a passenger ship, but was, rather, a freighter that took on passengers, and that it was to make fairly long calls at a number of ports. They discovered this in Constantinople—the first of the long stops, but the trip to Constantinople was pleasant, brief, and comfortable.

Petya was captivated by the wonders of life on board ship. Everything, every detail of its ultra-modern, technical efficiency, combined with the romantic flavour of the old sailing ships, fascinated him. The steady, even throbbing of the powerful engines merged with the fresh, lively sound of the waves as they surged past the iron sides in an unending stream. The strong wind, full of the smell of the open sea, whistled through the shrouds; it billowed out the canvas sleeves of the ventilator casings, bringing forth hot and cold draughts from the engine-room and the hold.

There was a mingling of all the smells: the warm', soothing smell of the polished mahogany tables in the lounges and the smell of painted bulkheads; the aromas of the restaurant and the smell of hot steel, lubricating oil and dry steam; the resinous-woody smell of the mats and the fresh smell of pine-water sprayed in the distant white-tiled rooms with hot and cold running water. There were the heavy swaying copper candle-holders with glass-covered candles, and the elegant, frosted globes of the electric lights; the steel gang-ways, the grates of the engine-room and the double oaken stairway with the polished carved banisters and graceful balusters leading to the saloon.

Petya explored every nook and cranny of the ship the very first day. He peeped into mysterious cubby-holes and into the depths of the coal bunkers, where dim electric lights burned day and night, trembling in their wire casings like trapped mice.

The practically upright ladders below decks with their slippery steel rungs

led the boy to grimier and less pleasant regions. Black oily water oozed underfoot, and he became queasy from the deafening booming and crashing of the engines, the continuous motion of the propeller shaft as it revolved in its oily bed, and the heavy air of the hold. Engineers, greasers, and stokers lived and worked in the depths of the ship. Every now and then the iron door of the stokehole flew open and Petya felt a blast of intense heat. Then he saw the stokers moving swiftly against the background of the flaming inferno, using their long crow-bars en the caked red-hot coal. Petya saw their black, sweat-drenched faces bathed in the crimson light and was terrified at the thought of remaining in such an appalling place even for five minutes.

He hurried away, slipping on the steel floor mats, holding on to greasy steel handrails, and running up and down ladders in his eagerness to get away from that forbidding world. But it was not so easy. Stunned by the din and jangle of engines throbbing somewhere close, Petya found himself in places such as he had never dreamed existed.

He knew there were deck passengers as well as first-and second-class ones, but he discovered that there was another category, the so-called "steerage" passengers, who were not even allowed on the lowest deck, the place usually reserved for cattle. They occupied wooden bunks in the depths of one of the half-filled holds.

Petya saw heaps of dirty oriental rags on which several Turkish families were sitting and lying, prostrated by the rolling and pitching of the ship, the stale air, the semi-darkness, and the noise of the engines. They were migrating somewhere together with their children, copper coffee-pots and large wicker crates filled with chickens. With great difficulty Petya made his way to the top deck, to the fresh sea air, where it took him quite a while to recover.

The first- and second-class passengers lived according to a strictly prescribed routine: at 8 a.m. the middle-aged stewardess in a starched cap entered their cabin, said, *"Buon giorno,"* and set a tray with coffee and rolls on the little table; at noon and again at 6 p.m. a waiter with a white napkin tucked under his arm would glide noiselessly down the corridor, knocking at every cabin door and rattling oft" in a truly *commedia dell'arte* manner, stressing his r's. *"Pr-rego, signor-ri, mangiar-r-re!"* which meant, "Dinner is being served."

First-class passengers had the additional privilege of five o'clock tea and a late supper. But the Bachei family, belonging to that golden mean of society that usually travelled second-class, failed to qualify.

The first and second classes had separate dining-rooms. The first mate presided at the second-class table d'hote. The captain, who was inaccessible to ordinary mortals and therefore shrouded in mystery, presided in the first-class dining-room. Even Pavlik, who was such a pusher, saw him not more than two or three times during the whole trip.

The first mate, on the other hand, was la jovial fellow and, judging by his shiny purple-pink Roman nose, a drunkard as well. He was the life and soul of the company. He pinched Pavlik gently under the table, calling him "little Russky," he was attentive in passing the ladies cheese and filling the gentlemen's wineglasses, and his snow-white, stiffly starched tunic rustled pleasantly as he turned now left, now right, bestowing his open-hearted smiles all round.

For dinner there were real Italian macaroni with tomato sauce, a second course of roast meat and *fagioli,* which turned out to be beans, and for dessert,

Messina oranges with twigs and leaves attached, wrinkled purple-green figs, and fresh almonds that did not necessitate a nutcracker, but were easily cut with a table knife right through the thick green outer husk and the still soft inner shell. Being served by a waiter somewhat embarrassed them. He would hold the platter to the left of them, balancing it on his finger-tips, and they had to help themselves. From a sense of modesty they always took much less than they would have liked to.

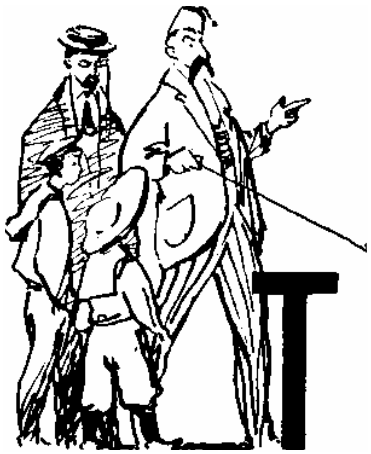
Vasily Petrovich was shocked and furious when he found out that wine went with the dinner—one bottle for three passengers. True, it was very weak and rather sour Italian wine, and the passengers mixed it with water half and half, but, none the less, Vasily Petrovich was outraged. The first time he saw a large bottle without any label placed before his setting he was so indignant that his beard shook, and he felt like shouting, "Take this brew away!" but he controlled himself in time and simply moved the bottle away.

Later, however, when he tasted it, he realized that the steamship company had no intention of making drunkards out of its second-class passengers by serving them strong, expensive wines, and so allowed the boys to colour their drinking-water with a few drops, in order not to waste it completely, as it had been included in the price of the tickets.

This daily water-colouring was the high light of the dinner-hour for Petya and Pavlik.

Ice-cold water was poured into a large goblet from a heavy, misty decanter that had become frosted in the ship's refrigerator; then a small amount of wine was added to the water.

The wine did not mix with the water immediately. It swirled around in threads and then spread out, making the water a bright ruby-red, and throwing a pink swaying star-like reflection on the starched table-cloth.



ISTANBUL

The biggest impression of those first days was the sight of the open sea. For a day and two nights, between Odessa and the Bosporus, there was no land in sight. The ship was making good speed, yet it seemed to be motionless in the centre of a blue circle.

At noon, when the sun was directly overhead, Petya could not figure out which way they were heading.

There was something entrancing about this seeming immobility, about the empty horizon and the triumph of the two blue elements—sea and sky—between which Petya's whole existence seemed to be suspended.

At dawn of the. second day he was awakened by the sound .of running feet overhead. The ship's bell was ringing, the engines had stopped and in the unusual stillness he could hear the clear gurgling sound of water lapping at the ship's side. He looked out the porthole and through the early morning mist saw a steep green bank. There was a little lighthouse and a barrack with a tiled roof on the bank.

Petya threw on his clothes and ran up on deck. A Turkish pilot in a red fez was standing next to the captain, and the ship inched slowly into the green lane of the Zoospores. The lane widened and narrowed like a meandering river. At times the bank would be so close that Petya thought he could stretch his arm and touch the leaning white tombstones chaotically scattered among the cypresses in the Moslem cemetery, the poppy-red flag with the crescent in the middle that waved over the custom-house, or the turf-covered earthwork of the shore batteries.

This was Turkey—they were now abroad, in a foreign country, and Petya suddenly felt a sharp pang of longing for his homeland, and, at the same time, a burning curiosity. The homesickness remained with him until he returned to Russia.

The sun was now quite high, and by the time they reached the Golden Horn and dropped anchor in the roads of Constantinople Bay the warm reflections of the water sparkled and gleamed all over the ship—from water-line to mast-top.

From then on the Bachei family was possessed by a madness common to all inexperienced tourists. They felt that every minute was precious and wanted to set out immediately to see all the sights of this most wonderful city, the panorama of which was so close that they could see the ant-like coming and going of crowds of people, the cupolas of the broad, tall mosques and the spires of the minarets.

They decided to forego breakfast and waited impatiently for a shrewd-looking Turkish official, who had been given several silver piastres, to scribble

something in Father's passport; the scribble turned out to be the Sign of Osman. The moment the Bacheis went down the gangway, they were pounced upon by artful boatmen. Finally, they flopped on to the velvet cushions of a wherry and, for two lire, were rowed ashore.

Everything that happened afterwards merged for Petya into a sensation of an endless, scorching, tiring day — the deafening babble of the truly Eastern bazaars, the equally Eastern deathly quiet of the huge deserted courts around the mosques and the stony museum-like iciness inside. At every step they parted with a steady stream of lire, piastres, paras, and copper medjidies, coins which delighted the boys with their inscriptions in Turkish and the strange Sign of Osman.

In Turkey the Bachei family first came in contact with that terrible phenomena known as guides, and guides pursued them for the remainder of their trip. There were Greek guides, Italian guides, and Swiss guides. Despite specific national traits, they all had something in common: they stuck like leeches. But the Constantinople guides left the others far behind.

The minute the Bacheis set foot on the pavements of Constantinople they were besieged by guides. The scene with the rival boatmen was repeated. The guides battled for their prey; it was a real free-for-all and massacre, to which no one paid the slightest heed.

The guides poured torrents of filth on each other in every language and dialect of the Levant; they tore at each other's starched dickeys, swung their sticks with contorted faces, elbowed each other, turned round and kicked out like mules.

In the end the Bacheis were claimed by an impressive-looking guide who had vanquished his opponents with the help of a policeman friend. He wore a morning coat that had faded badly under the arms, striped trousers, and a red fez. His wildly-dilated nostrils and coal-black janissary moustache expressed a determination to conquer or to die; however, in every other aspect his face, and especially his frightened baggy eyes, wreathed in smiles, bespoke a desire immediately to show the tourists all there was to see in Constantinople: Pera, Galata, Yildiz Kiosk, the Fountain of Snakes, the Seven-Towered Palace, the ancient water-line, the catacombs, the wild dogs, the famous St. Sophia Mosque, Sultan Ahmed's Mosque, Suleiman's Mosque, Osman's Mosque, Selim's Mosque, Bayezid's Mosque, and all the two hundred and twenty-seven other large and six hundred and sixty-four smaller mosques in the city—in other words, he was at their complete disposal.

He bundled them into a gleaming phaeton drawn by two horses, jumped on the step, looked round wildly, and told the driver not to spare the whip.

They were all in by evening, so much so that Pavlik fell asleep in the boat on the way back to the ship and had to be carried up the gangway.

Vasily Petrovich was aghast at the day's expenditure, not counting the fact that the breakfast and lunch due them on the ship had gone to waste. He decided not to have a guide next day, an intention that was furthered by the fact that that night the *Palermo* was taken from the outer roads to a berth to take on cargo along with a dozen other ships.

There could tie no chance of the guide finding them in the monotonous chaos of the crowded pier. They slept like logs in the small overheated cabin, oblivious to the clatter of the winches and the swift flashes of the multicoloured harbour

lights that filtered in through the porthole.

They awoke to a dazzling morning sun and the magic panorama of Istanbul. Vasily Petrovich and the boys hastened down the gangway. This was their last day ashore and they had to get as much out of it as they possibly could.

The first person they saw as they stepped down on the pier was their guide of the day before. He waved his bamboo cane over his head in greeting. The phaeton and the copper-faced, docile Macedonian on the coach-box were nearby.

It was the day before all over again, with the added attraction of being taken through the bazaars and the curio shops of the guide's friends.

Souvenir-buying turned out to be just as ruinous an undertaking as the guided tour. But the Bacheis, hypnotized by their impressions, had reached that stage of tourist fever when people shed all will-power and, with something akin to the lunatic's loss of reason, submit to their guide's every whim.

They bought stacks of crudely-coloured postcards of the places they had just seen; they parted with piastres and lire for cypress rosaries, for glass balls with coloured spirals, for tropical shells, for paper-knives, and for exactly the same kind of aluminium pen-nibs that were on sale at the Fair in Odessa.

At the Greek Monastery monks palmed off on them a yellow wooden box. Through the huge magnifying glass on the lid they were supposed to see a view of Athos. The box cost six piastres.

They came to their senses only in the European quarter of the city when they found themselves amid the sumptuous stores, restaurants, banks, and embassies set in the luxuriant dark verdure of southern gardens. The guide inveigled them into a friend's camera shop to buy Kodaks, and then he suggested dining at an exclusive French restaurant.

At this stage Vasily Petrovich came to, rebelled, and fleeing from luxury and extravagance, went to the other extreme by heading for Constantinople's slums, where they saw human misery at its lowest.

The slums shook Petya to the depths of his soul, and not even the visit to Scutari on the Asiatic shore could immediately restore his equilibrium.

The motor boat raced across the Bosporus, cleaving the green water with its prow, leaving two diverging glistening furrows in its wake. Hundreds of wherries were reflected in the waters of the still, lake-like strait. Turkish merchants, officials with brief cases, and officers travelling to and from Scutari, sat on velvet cushions under the light canopies.

Wet oars glittered all over the bay as they caught the sun's rays. The smell of thyme and savoury was borne to them from the Asiatic shore. But Petya could not erase the memory of the foul-smelling slums and the swarms of green flies buzzing around the festering sores of the beggars.

The moment they moored in Scutari the guide rushed on with renewed energy, determined not to miss a single one of the sights. Alas, our travellers were quite spent.

There was a bazaar nearby and they made for a stand with cool drinks. The lemonade with a strange flavour of anise drops was heavenly. They drank pink ice-water and ate coloured ice-cream. Then they turned to the wonderful variety of Eastern sweets.

Vasily Petrovich was always opposed to giving children too many sweets, since they were bad for teeth and appetite. But this time he could not resist the temptation of trying the *baklava* that was swimming in honey, or the salted

pistachio nuts whose bony shells had burst at the tips, like the fingers of a kid glove, so that the green kernels peeped through.

The sweets made them thirsty, and the cool drinks made them eat more sweets. The incident of Grandma's jam was still fresh in Petya's memory and he moderated his intake accordingly. But Pavlik was insatiable. He ate and ate. And when Father flatly refused to buy any more, Pavlik dived into the crowd and emerged a few minutes later, carrying a rather large box with bright lacquered pictures pasted all over it. It was a box of the best rahat-lakoum.

"Where did you get that?" Father asked severely.

"I bought it," Pavlik answered with bravado.

"What with?"

"I had a piastre and a half."

"Where did you get the money?"

"I won it!" Pavlik said proudly.

"What do you mean, you won it? Where? When? From whom?"

And so the whole story came out. While Father had been busy studying the planning of their travels and balancing expenses, while Petya had been spending his time on deck, Pavlik had made friends with the Italian waiter and had been introduced to the society of the second-class restaurant personnel. He had played lotto with them, using the three kopeks he had found in his pocket and which the Italian waiter changed into Turkish currency. Pavlik had been lucky, he had won a few piastres. Vasily Petrovich seized Pavlik by the shoulders and began to shout and shake the life out of him, heedless of the fact that they were in the middle of a large oriental *bazaar*.

"How dare you gamble? Wretch! How many times have I told you that no one with any respect for himself plays for money! And with ... with foreigners!"

Pavlik was feeling sick from the sweets and began to howl—he did not share his father's ideas about gambling, especially since he had been so lucky at it. Father was livid, there was no telling how it would have ended if the guide had not suddenly looked at his gold-plated American watch with four lids. They had just two hours left till sailing time.

All they needed now was to miss the boat! They rushed to the pier and jumped into the first wherry they saw without bothering to bargain down the price. Soon they were safely on board the *Palermo.* She had finished loading and had moved out into the harbour, ready to sail.

The parting with their guide was a dramatic scene. He had received his fee of two lire, but remained standing in the rocking boat on legs as all-enduring as those of an old wolf, watching Vasily Petrovich land the boys climb up the ladder. Then he began to ask for baksheesh.

He had always been very eloquent, a necessary accomplishment in his profession, but this time he outdid himself. He usually spoke three European languages simultaneously, inserting only the essential words in Russian. Now, however, he spoke mostly in Russian, inserting French phrases from time to time. His speech sounded something like a monologue out of the pseudo-classical tragedies of Racine and Corneille.

The language was obscure, the meaning clear. Extending his hand, which was covered with copper rings glittering with paste diamonds, and speaking as passionately as when he described the wonders of the city, he told them of his poverty-stricken family, burdened by a paralysed grandmother and four small

children who had neither milk nor clothing. He complained of approaching old age, of his trouble with the police who fleeced him of most of his earnings, of a chronic ulcer, of unbearable taxes, of the cutthroat competition. He begged them to take pity on an aged, penniless Turk who had dedicated his whole life to tourists. His thick greying eyebrows raised, his face took on a tragic expression, and the tears streamed down his cheeks.

All this could have passed for charlatanry, pure and simple, were it not for the genuine human suffering in his frightened brown eyes. Unable to withstand his pleading, Vasily Petrovich took the last Turkish coins from his pockets and poured them into the guide's outstretched hand.

CHICKEN BROTH

It was nearly evening, and one could sense the slowly gathering storm in the motionless air, heavy from the heat of the day. The storm was not approaching from any definite direction, it seemed to be materializing out of nothing over the amphitheatre of the city, over the mosques and minarets. By the time the heavy, grating anchor chain crawled upward, and the overloaded ship, sunk deeper than its water-line, began slowly to turn round, the sun had disappeared in the storm clouds. It was so dark that they had to turn on the lights. Hot smells of cooking and engines escaped from the hatches. The sight of the now colourless city heightened the stormy green of the Golden Horn.

The ship's engines were snorting heavily and laboriously. The surface of the water seemed as flat as a sheet of glass, yet the ship began to rock slightly.

Pavlik had just finished^ the last piece of rahat-lakoum, thickly coated with powdery sugar. He all but choked on it; it tasted doughy, and was gummy and sticky. Suddenly he felt an acid metallic after-taste in his mouth. His jaws contracted spasmodically. The greenness of the clear water reminded him of the rahat-lakoum and he shut his eyes tight. But the moment he did so, he felt he was flying up and down on a swing. With great effort he tried to say, "Daddy, I'm sick," but he was overtaken by vomiting.

At that instant a jagged flash of lightning pierced the coal-black clouds over the crescent of St. Sophia's and the surrounding minarets. It was followed by a crack that seemed to split the sky in two and poured the shattered fragments down upon the city and harbour. A whirlwind whipped up columns of dust on the hills. The water foamed. When they cleared Serai Burna and entered the Sea of Marmara, that is, the Marble Sea, its shoppy surface did indeed resemble the colour pattern of marble.

Petya missed the storm in the Sea of Marmara, for he, too, fell victim to Pavlik's malady. The two of them, white as chalk, lay prone in the stuffy cabin. Father rushed from one to the other, not knowing what to do. But the Italian stewardess, with long-practiced efficiency, ran up and down the corridor, providing the afflicted with basins.

There was more to it than the rocking of the vessel and the Eastern sweets. The boys, overtired, were feeling the effects of the rushing about in the heat, the noise of the streets, and the mass of new impressions. The seasickness soon passed, but they were feverish and delirious. The ship's doctor examined them thoroughly, in the traditional manner of the old European doctors: he pressed their tongues down with the handle of a silver spoon borrowed from the first-

class dining-room; his strong, experienced fingers kneaded their bare stomachs; he tapped them with a little rubber-tipped hammer; he listened to their breathing through a stethoscope and without it, by placing his large, fleshy ear to their bodies; he felt their pulse, keeping his eyes on his large gold watch, the lid of which reflected the round porthole and the water rushing past it; he joked in Latin with an alarmed Rather, trying to cheer him. He said there was nothing seriously wrong, that they should stay in bed for three days; he gave them laxative powders and left graciously, after prescribing chicken broth, toast, and a light omelette.

His last words gravely upset Vasily Petrovich, because experienced travellers in Odessa had warned him never to request anything from the ship's dining-room that was not on the menu, because: "You don't know those thieves: they'll rob you, that's how they make their money; they'll charge you for the service, the bread, la ten per-cent tip, and God knows what else, and before you know where you are, you'll have nothing left."

Although mortified by the prospect, Vasily Petrovich nevertheless struggled with his dictionary and in broken Italian ordered two bowls of chicken broth with toast and two omelettes, *a la carte.*

And to the boys missed the Dardanelles and Salonika, as well as the Sea of Marmara. Only the noises of the port, mingled with the confusion of Greek, Turkish, and Italian voices, reached them through the half-open porthole.

THE ACROPOLIS

They were sailing south through the Gulf of Salonika, with the open sea on the left and barren shores on the right. The coast gave way to hills which rose gradually until they became a mountain range. A single peak rose above the range, and a bank of motionless fluffy clouds hung over the peak. There was something enchanting about the lone mountain and the clouds that threw blue shadows on it. The passengers trained their binoculars on it as if they expected to see a miracle performed there before their very eyes.

Father, pressing his red Baedeker to his breast with one hand and holding his binoculars in the other, was also peering at the magic mountain. When Petya came up, he turned towards his son eagerly. His eyes shining with excitement, he placed Mother's little mother-of-pearl opera-glasses in Petya's hand and said:

"Look, Mount Olympus!"

Petya did not get the import of his words.

"What?"

"Olympus!" Vasily Petrovich repeated triumphantly. Petya decided that Father was joking, and laughed.

"You're not serious?"

"I told you it's Olympus!"

"Which Olympus? Mount Olympus?"

"Do you know of any other?"

And Petya suddenly realized that the land that was now so close was none other than ancient Pieria, and that this mountain was Homer's Olympus, the home of the Greek gods whom Petya knew so well from his ancient history.

Maybe the gods were still there? Petya lifted Mother's opera-glasses to his eyes, but, unfortunately, they were too weak to magnify the sacred mountain. All he could make out was a flock of sheep moving up a slope like the shadow of a cloud and the erect figure of the shepherd surrounded by dogs. He was certain, however, that he could see the gods quite clearly. One of the clouds resembled the reclining Zeus, another, flying in a flowing garment like Athena, was in all probability rushing to help Achilles at Troy.

The previous summer Vasily Petrovich, anxious to broaden the horizons of his sons, had read them the *Iliad* from cover to cover, so that Petya now had no trouble at all singling out the flying Athena. However, that meant that Troy, too, must be somewhere nearby.

"Daddy, where's Troy? Shall we see it?" Petya asked breathlessly.

"Alas, my boy," Father said, "we've left Troy far behind. It's near the Dardanelles, and you won't see it now." Then he added reproachfully, hinting at the sad affair of the Eastern sweets, "Thus Fate punishes Greed and Gluttony."

His words, undoubtedly, were just. Still, Petya thought Fate had been too

cruel in depriving them of the delight of seeing Troy with their own eyes—and all because of that awful rahat-lakoum.

In order not to set Petya too strongly against Fate, Vasily Petrovich hastened to add that they would not have been able to see Troy from the ship anyway, and peace between the boy and Fate was restored.

Two days later, when Petya saw Athens, he was more than rewarded for having missed seeing Troy.

The barren rocky mountains of Euboea, longest of the Greek islands, stretched for many weary miles. At last they left the island behind. That night they sailed through straits and saw lighthouses along the shore. The ship changed speed several times and swung round. It was late when they finally fell asleep, and next morning when they awoke the ship was anchored in Piraeus harbour, in full sight of Athens.

This time Vasily Petrovich was determined to do without the services of a guide.

The Greek guides differed from the Turkish in that they had amber rosaries in their hands, were shorter, and wore small black fezzes without tassels instead of red ones with black tassels. Unlike the warlike Moslems they did not make a frontal assault on the tourists, cursing and shouting; instead, they surrounded them silently like humble Christians and their endurance usually won out. When Vasily Petrovich found himself in the centre of a tight circle of guides fingering amber rosaries and looking at him with quiet, gentle, olive-black eyes, he did not feel at all intimidated.

"Nyet!" he said vehemently in Russian, and then, to sound more convincing, he added in French and in German, *"Non! Nein!"* At the same time his arm sliced through the air so swiftly in a gesture of refusal that Petya thought he heard the air whistle.

None of this, however, made any impression on the guides. They kept their ground, fingering their rosaries, their large noses drooping forlornly. Vasily Petrovich took his boys firmly in tow and forged ahead. The guides too moved on and did not let them out of the circle.

Vasily Petrovich ignored them. He strode down the streets of Piraeus with the confidence of a native. It was not for nothing that he had spent the past few days in his cabin, unmindful of the sea breezes, poring over a guide-book to Piraeus and Athens.

The startled guides made a timid attempt to hustle the Bachei family into one of the large, dilapidated carriages that trailed their footsteps; Pavlik yelled, "Go away!" as loud as he could, causing the guides to retreat somewhat. But the magic circle remained intact.

They reached the railway station without having once lost their way, bought tickets, and departed for Athens under the noses of the dumbfounded guides who crowded the platform. Athens turned out to be a stone's throw away. When they arrived there, they made their way to another station just as silently and as resolutely as before, and set out immediately for the ancient city in a suburban train with open carriages.

Excited by the battle with the guides, their victory, and the possibility of renewed attacks, they had not been paying much attention to their surroundings. However, when they reached the mountain-top, which was covered with marble fragments, and suddenly beheld the Acropolis: the Parthenon, the Propylaea, the

small temple of Wingless Victory, and the Erechteion—all of which seemed to be a confused mass and yet was an ensemble of heavenly unity—they gasped at the sheer beauty of the scene, an art that had been imitated time without number all over the world, becoming ever more insignificant and trivial.

Like all great monuments of architecture, they seemed at first sight to be rather small and exquisite, seen against the wild expanse of sky, so clear and so blue that it made their heads swim.

This was the realm of marble columns and stairways, yellowed by time, alongside which the figures of the numerous tourists seemed dwarfed.

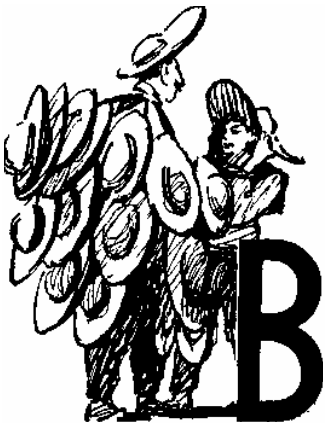
Oh, how Vasily Petrovich had dreamed of seeing the Acropolis with his own eyes, of touching the ancient stones! It had been the dream of his life. He had visualized the day when he would take his children to the Parthenon and tell them of the Golden Age of Pericles and of its genius, the great Phidias. Reality, however, which was much cruder and simpler, added to the majesty, so much so that Vasily Petrovich was unable to utter a word; he stood in silence, stooping slightly under the impact of the scene that moved him almost to tears.

Petya and Pavlik, on the other hand, were not losing any time; they scrambled up the slippery pebbles towards the Parthenon, wondering why it seemed so near and yet was so far. They helped each other up, scaring the lizards as they climbed the weather-beaten stairways, until they found themselves at last among the Doric columns, which seemed to have been put together from gigantic marble millstones.

The noonday sun blinded them, but they were not aware of the heat because there was a fresh wind blowing from the Archipelago. The tiled roof-tops of Athens glittered far below, blending with the landscape. They could see the port, the rows of ships, the forest of masts about the roofs of the warehouses, and out in the harbour, sprinkled with the silvery glitter of sunshine, was an English warship, emitting an ominous cloud of smoke.

Still further down, on the opposite shore, away beyond the hills, was the Gulf of Petalis, and they could see the azure strip of water that was more ancient than Hellas itself—the Gulf of Corinth.

One could stand there silently till nightfall, feeling neither fatigue, nor boredom, nor anything earthly, nothing but an awareness of the supreme beauty created by man.



THE NEW HAT

But they would have to hurry, for the ship sailed at five, and Vasily Petrovich wanted to show the boys the Athens museums. Nothing, however, could add to the impression made by the Acropolis: neither the marble statues of the gods and heroes, nor the earthen vessels behind the glass show-cases, nor the Tanagra statuettes, nor the amazing amphorae and flat bowls adorned with red and white figures against a black background.

Out once more in the narrow streets of the Piraeus port, with its picturesque oriental atmosphere, but possessing nothing that the Bacheis had not already seen in Constantinople, they decided to risk a cup of coffee in a Greek cafe.

It was cooler inside. The cafe smelt of boiling coffee, anise, roast lamb, and something else that was so appetizing it made the boys' mouths water. Vasily Petrovich tried to calculate the cost of a meal in drachmas, land decided to order two portions of a Greek dish for the three of them. A kindly little Greek woman, with a pronounced moustache and dressed in black, wiped the marble table-top with a kitchen towel and set down a platter of lamb stew with Greek sauce.

It was then, that they realized just what could be done with a small amount of purple egg-plants, red tomatoes, green pepper, parsley, and genuine olive oil.

While they were busy polishing off the last traces of the amber sauce with pieces of bread, the kindly proprietress stood stroking Pavlik's head. Her dark-brown hand was adorned with an Athos signet-ring and her sad eyes were full of maternal tenderness, as she said in broken Russian:

"Eat, boy, eat!"

When they had finished, she cleared the table, wiped the marble top again, and retired modestly behind the counter, where a candle was burning beneath an icon and a palm branch. Her husband now took her place. He brought in a tray with three small cups of steaming coffee, three glasses of water, three saucers with Greek pastry, and three saucers of wild-orange jam with nuts. Besides all this, he asked Vasily Petrovich in broken Russian whether he would care for a hookah, an offer which was rejected with considerable vehemence.

It was cosy and homely in the cafe. There were lace curtains on the windows, the walls were papered, and a canary warbled in a bamboo cage.

There were other customers in the cafe, but they sat around their tables so sedately and unobtrusively that they did not in any way disturb the tranquillity of the establishment. They had cups of coffee and glasses of water before them, but, engrossed in games of dominoes, telling their beads, or reading newspapers, they hardly touched them; they were more like relatives than chance customers. Even the portraits of the King and Queen of Greece over the door leading to the kitchen did not have an official look about them, and could have passed for

enlargements of Grandma and Grandpa on their wedding day. It was hard to believe that the marble temple of the Parthenon which crowned the summit of the nearby mountain had been built by the ancestors of these mild-looking Greeks who were moving the dominoes across the marble table-tops and sucking the snake-like pipes of their gurgling hookahs.

While the Bacheis were sipping the strong coffee, the proprietor remained standing near their table, entertaining them in their own tongue. His sister, he told them, was married to the eldest son of Themistocles Kriadi, the owner of a Greek bakery in Odessa, and he himself had spent three years in Odessa as a boy. His grandfather, who had been a member of the Hetaeria, a secret society, had lived in Odessa for a while too, whence he had returned to fight for the liberation of Greece and had been executed by the Turks.

Apparently, he had taken Vasily Petrovich for a Russian revolutionary, forced to flee abroad, and so he made no bones about criticizing the state of affairs in Russia and the Russian government; he heaped abuse on the tsar, Nicholas the Bloody, and was certain there would soon be another revolution in Russia which would dethrone the tyrants and bring freedom for all.

Vasily Petrovich felt uncomfortable and anxiously looked round several times, but each time the proprietor assured him that all decent Greeks sympathized with the Russian revolution, and that they would soon have a revolution -in Greece, too, to get rid of the Turks once and for all. His Russian was so impossible that the boys were bursting with restrained laughter. Pavlik even held his nose tight to keep from giggling. Father tapped the marble table menacingly with his wedding-ring and they calmed down a bit.

Street vendors came in several times and offered the foreigners their wares.

One had long strings of dried sponges hanging round his neck and was carrying a bowl of goldfish. The orange-red fish swam among wisps of seaweed and were of such a brilliant hue that the coffee shop was lighted up by an eerie glow and resembled a submarine kingdom.

Another had dozens of pairs of hard slippers with curled pointed toes and streaming pink and light-blue gauze scarves which immediately transformed the cafe into a kind of *Arabian Nights* shop.

This impression was heightened by a Syrian selling oriental rugs, and when a man with long robes and copper-wares appeared on the threshold, there could be no doubt left that the Bachei family was now in Baghdad and that the cafe proprietor was none other than Harun-al-Rashid in disguise.

However, the appearance of a seller of Eastern sweets, who laid out before them his bright lacquered boxes of halvah, rahat-lakoum, and dates, so terrified the boys, and especially Pavlik, who felt a menacing acid lump in his throat, that the mirage vanished on the instant.

Although Vasily Petrovich had made up his mind not to buy anything, he failed to resist the temptation, the only excuse Being that the purchase was both inexpensive and essential. He bought Petya a wide-brimmed straw hat. It did not exactly go with his naval cadet's outfit, but he could no longer wear his warm sailor's cap. Petya's head was dripping wet; sweat trickled down his temples and his neck. His cap would be so drenched with perspiration during the day that it would barely dry by morning.

Petya was loath to part with the cap which made him look like the Boy Captain. He tried the new hat on in front of the fly-blown mirror and saw that he

now resembled a Boer. At any rate, Boer generals wore the same kind of wide-brimmed hats, although theirs were felt, not straw. Petya had often seen their pictures in old copies of the *Niva,* dating back to the Boer War. All he needed now was a carbine and bandolier.

"You look just like a young Boer," Father said. That settled it.

The young Boer strutted around in front of the mirror and was eager to parade on the streets in his new attire.

Just then the sound of a long boat whistle came from the direction of the port. They immediately recognized the deep Italian baritone of the *Palermo*— they could pick it in a thousand. And so, leaving a few drachmas on the table, they rushed towards the pier.

The *Palermo* was already out in the harbour. Suddenly, Petya realized that he had forgotten his old cap in the coffee-house. He broke out in a cold sweat; without a word, he turned round and raced back. Neither Father nor Pavlik noticed his absence at first. It was all too apparent, however, when they were getting into the boat. That which Vasily Petrovich had dreaded above all was now a reality: one of the children was lost!

Meanwhile, Petya was frantically running up and down the dockland alleys looking for the coffee-house. But all the side-streets were alike, and there were so many coffeehouses on each street that he soon realized he was lost. He had lost all sense of direction and cursed himself for having got so excited about the new hat as to forget the old one. In every cafe he saw the same marble-topped tables, portraits of the King and Queen of Greece, dominoes, steaming cups of coffee, gurgling hookahs, papered walls, lace curtains, little moustached women behind the counters under the icons with the palm branches and burning candles, proprietors absorbed in their newspapers.

Petva rushed into passionate explanations, switching from Russian to French, telling them he had lost his cap, but no one understood him, because the Greeks knew very little Russian, and his French was pretty bad. Petya thought of Near Mills, of Terenty, and Sinichkin. The picture of Gavrik stuffing the letter under the lining of the sailor's cap Uncle Fedya had made was so clear in his memory. Now he knew that Uncle Fedya had left the seam open on purpose, that he, Petya, had been entrusted with a very important mission. They had relied on him, and he had behaved like a vain, foolish child who had imagined he looked like a Boer in his silly straw hat.

He was so ashamed of himself and so upset that he *was* ready to cry.

He hated the new straw hat that was bobbing up and down on an elastic band on his back as he darted among the peddlers, donkeys with creels of fruit, ice-cream vendors, and street barbers. The coffee-house he sought had vanished into thin air. His one thought v/as to find it, and there was no telling how it would have ended if he had not heard the *Palermo* blow her third and last whistle. He ran in the direction of the sound and finally came out on the pier where Father was explaining something from his *Self-Taught Greek* handbook to a port official in a tunic and a hard-peaked cap with purling.

"There he is! Thank God!" Vasily Petrovich shouted and shook his handbook so vigorously over his head that his pince-nez fell off his nose and dangled on the black cord. "Dreadful child! How dare you! Where have you been all this time?"

"I forgot my cap," Petya panted. "I looked everywhere for it. I don't know

where it is. I couldn't find our coffeehouse."

"What!" Father screamed. "Because of a filthy, rotten cap!"

"Daddy, it's not rotten!" Petya mumbled mournfully.

"Rotten!" Father bellowed.

"Oh, Daddy, you don't understand a thing!" Petya groaned.

"I don't understand?" Father said and his lower jaw and shaking beard jutted out as he grabbed the boy by the shoulders.

He began to shake him, shouting, "I don't understand? Don't understand?" when the moustached Greek proprietress suddenly appeared on the pier, carrying a small package.

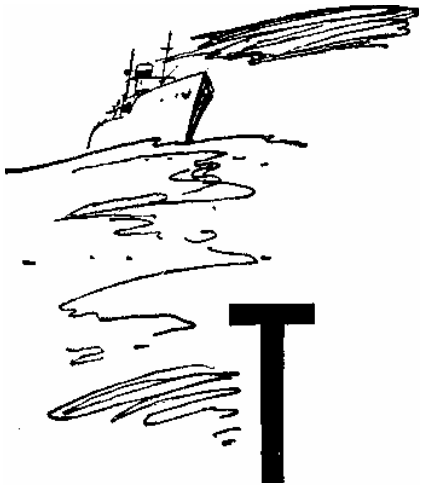
"Boy," she said, smiling sadly, "you forget your hat. Ai-ai-ai. It so hot in Athens, but in the nights on the vapora in Archipelago you'll be cold, your little head gets cold. Here your hat."

Petya grabbed his cap. It was wrapped up in la back copy of a French-Language newspaper, *Le Messager d'Athenes.* He did not even get a chance to thank the kind woman, as his father bundled him into the boat, which hurried them off to the ship. They reached it just as the sailors were about to pull in the gangway.

An hour later the "vapora," as the kind Greek woman had called the ship, was passing Aegina Island. Athens had vanished in the blur of magic colours of a Mediterranean sunset.

Petya saw nothing of it. He was busy in the cabin, removing the slightly creased and sweat-soaked letter from the lining of his cap and putting it in the inner pocket of his Alpine rucksack. The address on the envelope was in French:

W. Oulianoff
4. Rue Marie Rose
Paris XIV.



THE MEDITERRANEAN

They were a long time rounding Greece, and finally they cleared Cape Malea. The last of the islands, resembling a hunk of dry bread, was swallowed up by the purple swell of the Archipelago. For two days they were out of sight of land. The sun rose and set, but the barren flatness of the Mediterranean seemed motionless. The sea kept changing colours: it was dark blue at dawn, bright blue at noon, and copper-purple at sunset, but there was no hint of green in it, as in the Black Sea. They were already conscious of the nearness of Africa, that huge burning continent, and if it had not been for the wind—true, a hot one, but tempered somewhat by the sea—it would have been very hard to endure the intense, almost tropical, heat.

The wind was chasing long rows of waves along the Ionian Sea. The deck rose and fell gently enough to make the rolling of the ship even pleasant. The engines worked steadily. From time to time stokers who had finished their shifts would appear in the forecastle, where they would douse each other with sea water from the fire-pump. Petya had learned to tell the time by their appearance. But in point of fact it was immaterial what the time was—time seemed just as motionless as the ship in the middle of the blue expanse.

Petya roamed all over the *Palermo*. One of the strangest places was the cattle-deck which housed a herd of cows. Petya felt that he was in a cowshed as he walked down the narrow passage-way between the rows of cows' tails. The cows shifted their weight lazily, making the manure ooze through their cloven hoofs. He was glad to feel the springy layers of straw beneath his feet instead of the hard deck planks. Part of the deck was taken up by bales of pressed hay which obscured the view of the sea. The hot sun beat down on the hay, making it exude all its stored-up field smells. Petya would pull a dry, withered stalk of siage or burdock out of the solid mass, rub it between his palms, and smell the powdered leaves. Then he would think he was somewhere in Bessarabia, in Budaki, and not on board a ship sailing in the Mediterranean. It was strange and very pleasant.

It was fun to crawl past the signal bell to the very tip of the bow, lie down on the hot deck, cautiously stick his head over the side and look all the way down. A huge anchor arm protruded from the hawse-hole there, and still farther below he could see the ship's stem cut through the waves with a sure constancy. Salt spray blew into his face, he felt the metallic smell of the deeply ploughed waves, and below the water-line he saw the bright red of the keel shining through the boiling sapphire of the water. This was the one spot where the ship's motion, its full speed, could really be appreciated, making him as dizzy as if he were on a

merry-go-round. Petya could have watched the rushing water for hours on end, listening to the strains of a mandolin played by Pieripo, one of the stokers, a young lad with pearly flashing teeth and blue-black curly hair. After coming off watch he would sit astride the anchor chain and pluck the strings, evoking with its gentle tinkling notes a foretaste of Italy.

And then, Italy lay before him. A dim cone loomed up through the morning mist. This was Mount Etna. It began to grow taller and wider; la strip of hilly country rose from the sea. They were approaching Sicily.

The nearer they got to the shore, the gloomier did the land look. It was nothing like Petya's mental picture of Italy.

They could see Catania quite clearly on the rocky slope. The port was surrounded by hillsides of hardened black lava which descended to the water, giving it its dark hue.

Italy had a harsh welcome for the travellers: there was a sirocco blowing. The Italians pronounced it "shirokko"; it was a dry, scorching wind from Africa. The mercury reached 113°. Clouds of dust rolled along streets that had been hacked out of the lava streams or paved with lava stones, just as in Odessa. The sky was a dull leaden yellow. Mules and horses with red ear-muffs harnessed to fancy carriages stood glumly on the square, and the wind blew the spray of a fountain and their dusty tails to one side.

A few straggling pedestrians moved phlegmatically along the street. Even the guides who were sitting around the fountain were too listless to come over to the tourists, and merely waved their picture postcards.

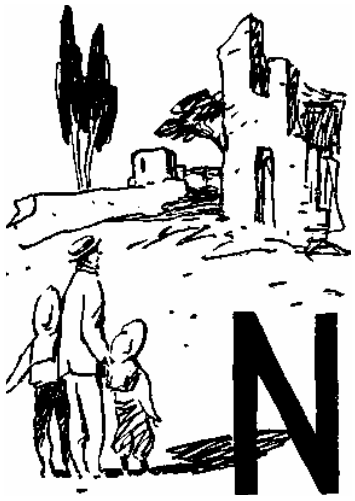
They could hear the dry rustle of palm leaves, whipped by the wind. The green-black leaves of magnolia trees gleamed dully; the paths were strewn with broken branches and huge waxen flowers, dead and speckled with the brown of decay; shreds of grey cobweb fluttered in the laurels and stone-pines—all dominated by the shadow of Mount Etna.

The wisest thing would have been to return to the ship. But Vasily Petrovich's guide-book stated that the city stood on the site of ancient Catana which, except for the ruins of its Forum, theatre, and some other early Roman architectural relics, had been buried in lava. He was determined that the boys should see them.

They doggedly climbed uphill against the wind, exhausted land sweating profusely, until at last they beheld the ruins. By then, however, the boys were so tired that the sights meant nothing to them.

They by-passed the museum. They felt that they had been roaming for ages through the streets of the city, that in all likelihood the ship had finished unloading and taking on fresh cargo, and they could now resume the voyage.

But the sirocco had slowed work down at the port; the cattle had just been taken off, and the Bacheis had to push their way through the herd to get on board. The animals were too weary to moo; they only looked at Petya's straw hat through bleary eyes, while the sirocco tore at their tails and whistled around their horns.



MESSINA

Next day the ship entered the Strait of Messina and dropped anchor opposite the city of the same name. What a wonderful change it was! Here was the picturesque Italy of world-famous water-colours and oleographs: a blue sky, a still bluer sea, white sails, cliffs, and shores covered by orange and olive groves.

From the harbour, Messina looked enticing and beautiful, but Petya suddenly felt there was something wrong in the number of houses and the way they were spaced. There seemed to be fewer than there should have been. And there were sinister dead spaces between them, hidden amongst the scraggy underbrush.

There was something vaguely frightening in the very name of the city. Not until they reached the pier did Petya realize half the city was in ruins.

Then, suddenly, he recalled the words the whole world had uttered in terror three years before: the Messina earthquake. He himself had often repeated those words, without really understanding them. He had seen the ruins of Byzantium, of ancient Greece, and of early Roman settlements, but these had been magnificent stones, historical monuments, and no more; they had fallen into a state of decay over thousands of centuries. They were truly astounding, but they did not wring the heart. Now, however, Petya was looking at heaps of recent debris which, not so very long ago, had been streets of houses. The city had been destroyed and tens of thousands of people had perished in a matter of minutes, and neither fortress towers, nor marble columns, nor anything else remained as a reminder of the catastrophe. A pitiful heap of rubbish, bits of walls with shreds of cheap wallpaper still clinging to them, stucco laths, broken glass and twisted iron beds, overgrown with pea-trees and nightshade, was all that met the eye. It was the first destroyed city that Petya had ever seen; and it was not a famous ancient one from his history book—no, this was a very ordinary, rather small modern Italian city, inhabited by very ordinary Italians.

Years later, when Petya, a grown man, beheld the ghastly ruins of European cities, he was still haunted by the ruins of Messina.

It was the same depressing scene of abject poverty everywhere, although partially concealed by lush southern vegetation and the bright colours of the Sicilian summer. Most of the inhabitants were still living in temporary shacks, tents, and huts thrown together from the debris. Multi-coloured rags were drying on the clothes-lines. Goats grazed on the grass-grown rubbish heaps. Half-naked children with eyes as shiny as anthracite roamed the razed streets and poked in the ruins, still hoping to find something of value there.

The little shacks on the sites of former shops sold postcards, lemonade, coal, and olives.

The Bacheis walked down the scorching streets of the half-dead city, surrounded by fishermen, boatmen, and children. They grabbed the tourists' hands, smiled, looked into their faces, and showered them with torrents of rapid Italian. These people were neither guides nor beggars, and it was impossible to understand what they wanted. They patted Petya's sailor's collar and touched his blue blouse excitedly repeating, *"Marinaio russo, marinaio russo!"*

Suddenly, Vasily Petrovich understood what it was all about. He remembered that a Russian squadron had been anchored off Messina at the time of the earthquake and that the sailors had selflessly and courageously helped the people of the doomed city. Petya's regulation naval blouse and many other things about them told the people that the Bacheis were Russians, and they were expressing their gratitude, especially to the little Russian sailor.

They used strange words but understandable gestures to describe the terrible earthquake and the heroism of the Russian sailors who had rushed into the burning houses and pulled the injured and the dying from under the ruins.

A grey-haired, ragged woman, carrying a large earthen pitcher, pushed her way through the crowd and offered the Bacheis a tray with three glasses of cold water—*aqua frescal*—as her only means of expressing her gratitude to the Russians. Petya's heart swelled with pride, but he regretted that he was not wearing his sailor's cap and was sorrier still that it did not have the St. George ribbon.

"Grazie, Russo!" the Italians repeated, shaking hands with all three, and this was quite understandable.

There were other words spoken too:

"Evviva la rivoluzione, evviva la republica russa!"

Apparently, in the eyes of the Messina fishermen and boatmen, Vasily Petrovich's dishevelled beard, his steel-framed pince-nez, his democratic-looking Russian shirt and tussore coat corresponded to their image of a Russian revolutionary, a man illuminated by the far-off blaze of 1905, the undying glory of the barricades in Presnya District in Moscow and the mutiny on board the battleship *Potemkin.*

That evening the *Palermo* weighed anchor, passed out of the Strait of Messina, entered the Tyrrhenian Sea, and set course for Naples, her home port.

PLINY THE YOUNGER

The stifling night was so black that even the stars that thickly spangled the velvet sky did little to lighten it. Were it not for the shimmering, snow-white foam down below, the slight tilt of the deck underfoot, and the swishing sound of the waves racing past, one would think the ship was flying, not sailing.

Petya could not fall asleep that night, perhaps because it was their last night aboard. He paced up and down his favourite walk, the spar-deck near the wheel-house. The sailor at the helm was as still as a statue. Petya liked to watch him, waiting for the mysterious, inexplicable moment when, for no apparent reason, the helmsman would move his hands and turn the wheel a little. It spun around smoothly and silently; yet immediately, somewhere right beneath their feet, the engine began to work; they heard short bursts of escaping steam, a chain rattled, and steel rods moved in their oiled grooves along the sides, slightly turning the rudder. That meant that the ship had yawed and the helmsman was bringing her back.

There was something strange about the fact that the ship sailing on its course should suddenly yaw. What mysterious forces of nature could affect its simple mechanical movement? The wind? Currents? The motion of the Earth? Petya did not know the answer, but the realization that these unknown forces existed and were constantly at work all around him, and that it was possible to overcome them, instilled in Petya a great respect for the helmsman and a still greater respect for the compass at which he glanced from time to time.

For the first time in his life Petya really grasped the full meaning of this wonderful, simple instrument, invented by man's genius to battle against the dark forces of nature. A brass bowl on a cast-iron stand stood alongside the wheel, and a brightly illumined dial set on a thin pin seemed to be floating freely inside it under a glass cover. The disk, or compass card, was divided into points, degrees, and fractions of degrees. The navigator had laid a copper ruler to point out their course, and the moment the ship veered ever so slightly the markings on the disk moved out of place: then the helmsman, by turning the wheel, would bring them into place again.

The copper ruler was now pointing towards Naples. Although everything around them was as black as the bottom of la coal-pit, the ship raced ahead unerringly, at full speed, making up for the time lost at their ports-of-call.

Suddenly Petya noticed a strange light away on the horizon. It did not look like a lighthouse or like the glow of an approaching ship. It was almost red and very uneven. It shone for a while and went out; two minutes later it would flare

up again, shine and go out again; and so it continued at regular intervals—a rhythmic appearing and disappearing, but growing bigger all the time. It was as if someone had put a smouldering matchstick in his mouth, and the breathing-made the little ember glow brightly.

By now the waves and the edges of a dark night cloud were brushed with light, and a blast of heat seemed to come from the direction of the glow.

"What can it be?" Petya exclaimed in a frightened voice.

"Stromboli," a familiar voice answered. This was the first mate who had just come up on the spar-deck. "Il *famoso vulcano Stromboli"* he repeated solemnly and handed Petya his large sea binoculars, the dark lenses of which reflected the red glow of Stromboli.

They were passing the volcano now and Petya looked at it through the binoculars. Just then a flame shot up, as if coming from the pipe of a samovar. The fire illuminated the edge of the crater, and Petya even thought he heard an underwater rumbling and felt a wave of volcanic heat, but it was only his fancy.

Before long Stromboli had slipped behind; however, its fiery breath could be seen through the pitch darkness, casting a grim light on the waves and clouds.

Petya was in ecstasy: he had just seen with his own eyes a fire-spouting mountain, a real, genuine volcano! It wasn't every schoolboy who could boast of having seen one. Schoolboy—why, probably not even a single teacher had ever been so near to a real volcano! Not even the geography teacher. Not even the head of the school. Maybe the head of the Education Department had seen one, but certainly not the school inspector. What would Auntie say when she found out he had seen a volcano! And what la fuss their friends would make! This time not even Gavrik would wrinkle up his nose disdainfully, spit through his teeth and say, "Now tell me another." Too bad there were no witnesses except the helmsman and the first mate. Perhaps though it was even better that Daddy and Pavlik had slept through it all. This time Petya would be cock of the walk of the Bachei family.

Petya waited until the volcano had disappeared completely and then rushed below anticipating his triumph and Pavlik's humiliation when he would burst into the cabin and say, "I've just seen a volcano—you've slept through the whole thing!"

But the triumph was not to be: all the other passengers had long been lining the rails, and Pavlik, who had been awakened by his waiter friend, was standing at the stern, his chin pressed against the rail, trying to look interested while Vasily Petrovich lectured in popular vein on the volcano they had just observed.

Thereupon Petya went below to the cabin to be the first to inform Auntie of the great event. He rummaged in his rucksack and found the nicest of all the Constantinople postcards with a picture of the Galata Tower on it, and wrote: "Dear Auntie! You'll never guess what happened! Of course, you won't believe me, but I've just seen a real, active volcano with my own eyes!"

Petya paused, made a bargain with his conscience, and resolutely added: "It was erupting!"

By this time Petya was really convinced that the volcano had been erupting. When he had snatched up his pencil, he was bursting with impressions and was ready to fill up every inch of space on the postcard with a magnificent description of a volcano erupting in the open sea. But no sooner had he written the first majestic sentences than his inspiration petered out.

To tell the truth, Pliny the Younger had already described an erupting volcano and Petya, having read the description in his geography textbook, did not feel like competing with one of Rome's finest writers, especially since Pliny had described something that he had witnessed, whereas Petya would have to describe what he had not seen.

And so after the words "It was erupting!" he added: "Your loving nephew Petya," and hid the postcard in the rucksack, hoping to post it at the first opportunity.

Thus, if Petya's description of the erupting volcano lacked something of Pliny's accuracy, its truly classical laconism left the great writer's effort very much in the shade.

NAPLES AND THE NEAPOLITANS

A number of rocky islands were sighted during the day. Bathed in the silver light of the noonday sun, they seemed like some ethereal silhouettes of varying shades of deep blue: the nearer ones a darker hue, the more distant—lighter. The *Palermo* was steaming full speed ahead. It had disembarked the last of the steerage passengers, its freight decks had been swabbed and scrubbed white, the copper coamings and ladders were shining brightly, the lifeboats and lifebuoys had had a fresh coat of paint, the Italian flag was fluttering in the breeze; the *Palermo* again became a spick and span ocean liner.

"There's Capri, and Ischia, and Procida," Vasily Petrovich called out the names of the islands they were passing as they entered the Bay of Naples.

"Vesuvius!" Pavlik shouted at the top of his lungs. True enough, it was Vesuvius. The grey-blue silhouette of the twin peaks, with sulphurous smoke pouring out of one of them, was outlined sharply in the bright haze. It melted before their eyes, vanished into thin air, and revealed a panorama of the city and hundreds of ships at anchor in the harbour.

A flock of gulls attacked the *Palermo.* The graceful white birds floated on outspread wings, snatching at shreds of greens thrown out of the kitchen porthole. To tell the truth, Petya was already bored with the ship. At first, when everything had been new and mysterious, it had fascinated him; now, however, at the end of the long voyage, it no longer interested him. But when he set foot on the paved yard of the Naples custom-house, he, like the Prisoner of Chillon, suddenly regretted his prison.

He felt, after all, that he did not want to part with the ship, with its wonderful places, strange smells, and the long, narrow, unpainted beech deck planks caulked with tar and scrubbed clean with sand.

During the customs inspection Petya was terrified lest the Italian inspector find the letter in his rucksack. However, the more than meagre baggage of the Bachei family was completely ignored by the customs officers.

The official did not even glance at the unique concoction of the Odessa harness-and-luggage industry as he passed by. All he did was jab his thumb in it, and the agent following him drew a circle in chalk on each of their bags. The Bacheis were now free to pick up their things and go.

There was something humiliating in this official disdain, for they did examine the other passengers' baggage. These were mainly the expensive trunks and suitcases of the first-class passengers, covered with gay hotel labels. The

officials minutely examined the exquisite clothing, pulled out Syrian shawls, crystal humidors of Turkish tobacco, and round jars of Russian caviar, and respectfully demanded duty.

Vasily Petrovich and the boys hoisted their Alpine bags with some effort and hauled the bursting sack out on to the scorching square. They were immediately surrounded by a crowd of screeching hotel agents. Each had a gold-braided cap with the name of his hotel on the peak. Petya had once witnessed a similar scene at the Odessa railway station, whither they had gone to meet Grandma. It had amused him to see a swarm of vociferous agents dragging at the coat-tails of a protesting gentleman clutching his umbrella.

But the Odessa agents were no match for their Neapolitan colleagues. The Neapolitans were three times more numerous and four times as audacious. They shrieked as they attacked Vasily Petrovich: *"Grand-Hotel! Continental! Livorno! Vesuvio! Hotel di Roma! Hotel di Firenze! Hotel di Venezia!"* They brandished wads of brightly illustrated prospectuses and promised fabulously low rates, unheard-of comforts, suites facing Vesuvius, family table d'hote, breakfasts thrown in, and excursions to Pompeii.

Vasily Petrovich waved frantically to a group of porters in blue blouses with badges on their chests who were sitting on the flagstones, utterly indifferent to the massacre of defenceless tourists by hotel agents. Vasily Petrovich tried to break through to the cabmen. He was successful too, but they were as impassive as the porters: they sat on their high boxes with meters, smoking long, foul-smelling cigars, and not one of them offered Vasily Petrovich a helping hand.

On the contrary, when he had finally managed to gain the lower step of one of the cabs, the cabman glared at him, snatched off his well-worn felt hat, shook it menacingly at Vasily Petrovich and screamed, *"No, signor, no!"* so that Vasily Petrovich was forced to retreat.

There was something sinister about the strange indifference of the cabmen and porters. Vasily Petrovich did not know what to make of it. Later on they found out that they had arrived in Naples the day the coachmen, porters, and tramway workers had struck work in protest against the government's preparations for war with Turkey.

But this did not help the Bacheis very much, for the hotel agents, apparently satisfied that Italy should conquer Tripoli, were not on strike. Despite his deep dislike of the police, Vasily Petrovich was about ready to appeal to two carabineers for help. They were as alike as peas in a pod: both wore three-cornered hats and black trousers with red stripes down the sides, both had the same type of moustache and both had big noses. But at that moment things took a different turn.

A small, fat, shrewd hotel agent had the bright idea that the way to a father's heart lay through his love for his son. He hoisted a kicking Pavlik on to one shoulder, the plaid rucksack on to the other, and made off down a side-street. Vasily Petrovich and Petya dashed after him, but it took them a good forty minutes of fast sprinting to catch up with him at the Hotel Esplanade.

When he had finally deposited Pavlik and the rucksack in the lobby, the agent hung his cap up on a peg over the desk and was immediately transformed from agent into owner of the establishment. It turned out that he also personified four others: waiter, chef, lift-boy and porter—in other words, he was the entire personnel of the hotel, not counting the chamber-maid and cashier— posts held

by his wife.

The Hotel Esplanade was located between a second-hand clothing shop and an eating-house in an alley so narrow that no two carriages could ever pass each other there. This, however, was a minor detail, for the alley was actually a large stairway of wide and worn stone slabs. Garments of every hue were drying on the clotheslines strung between the tall, narrow houses, and although Naples was resplendent in the radiant colours of June, the alley was dark and damp; even a green gas-lamp shone in the window of the eating-house.

Hotel Esplanade boasted but four rooms, all of them facing the glassed-in gallery of the courtyard which was very much like the courtyards in the older parts of Odessa—the only difference being that here the flowering oleanders and azaleas grew not out of green tubs, but straight out of the ground, and the garbage heap was full of oyster shells, red crayfish shells, and squeezed-out lemons, in addition to green vegetable parings and fish entrails. When Vasily Petrovich saw the two forbidding canopied beds, the chipped iron wash-basin adorned with views of the Bay of Naples, and the wallpaper which told only too well of bedbugs, he grabbed up his rucksack, ready to run from the den, but his tired legs failed him. He sank into a wobbly chair, took out his Italian phrase-book, and began bargaining. The proprietor insisted on ten lire a day, Vasily Petrovich offered one. They finally settled for three, which was only one lira more than it should have cost. They were now free to begin the sightseeing. But Vasily Petrovich suddenly felt too tired to get up from his chair. Now only did he realize how exhausting the long sea voyage had been, although it had seemed so pleasant and comfortable. With an effort he reached the bed and lay there all in, wiping the glasses of his pince-nez with his handkerchief.

"I think," he said, addressing the boys with an apologetic smile, "I'll have a nap. You should have forty winks too. Take off your sandals and lie down for a bit."

Pavlik, who could hardly keep his eyes open, began taking off his sandals. Petya, however, was dying to see the city. He wanted to send off his correspondence: the letter Gavrik had given him and the postcard he had written to Auntie, describing the "eruption" of Stromboli. Father was opposed to the idea, but Petya said with such assurance that he wasn't a baby and looked so deeply pious as he faced the crucifix, crossed himself, and promised he'd be back the minute he bought the stamp, that Vasily Petrovich finally agreed and gave him a silver lira for the stamps. Pavlik's eyes turned green at the sight of it. "What about me?" he said, buckling on his sandals.

"You should *go* to sleep," Petya answered coldly.

"I'm not asking you, I'm asking- Daddy."

"God forbid!" Father was aghast at the mere thought.

"I like that," Pavlik said, his face all screwed up, just in case he might have to sta[r]t crying at a moment's notice.

"What do you mean—I like that?" Father asked sternly.

"Petka can go and I've got to stay in?"

"First of all, don't say, 'I like that.' It's about time you learned how to behave, and secondly, say, 'Petya, 'riot ' Petka.' "

"All right," Pavlik agreed readily. "But if Petya can go, why can't I?"

"Because Petya's older than you are."

Pavlik hated that argument. No matter how much he grew, or how hard he

tried, he was always smaller than Petya.

"It's not my fault that Petya's older," he whined. "He goes everywhere, but I can't go anywhere!"

"I have a special reason for going. I have my correspondence to attend to, while you just want to come along to make mischief," Petya said in his haughtiest voice.

"Maybe I have correspondence too? Daddy, please, let me go!"

"It's out of the question!" Father said resolutely, and Pavlik's spirits rose.

As a rule, after saying, "It's out of the question," Father would pause arid add, "but if you give me your word that you'll behave..." or something to that effect. And so to speed things up, Pavlik shammed a fit of tears, stealing looks at Father out of the corner of his eye. He knew his daddy.

"However," Vasily Petrovich said, unable to stand the tears, "if you promise to—"

"Oh, I swear by the Holy Cross!" Pavlik said quickly —and blundered.

Father frowned.

"How many times have I told you never to swear! An oath degrades the person who takes it. When you promise something, it is enough to give your word. Any decent person's word can only be sacred. So', one's word is enough."

"I give you my word," Pavlik said triumphantly, buckling a sandal, and, in his haste, made another blunder.

"What do you give me your word about?"

"That I'll behave."

"That's the main thing. And don't move an inch from Petya."

"I won't."

"You won't what?"

"I won't move an inch from Petya," Pavlik said.

"Very well then."

"And tell him to listen to me," Petya added, "otherwise I won't take him, because he'll surely get lost and I'll be responsible for him."

"I won't get lost," Pavlik said.

"Yes, you will! You always get lost!"

"Who got lost last time, in Odessa, when we nearly got left behind, and when Auntie was so worried she nearly went crazy?"

"Fibber!"

"I'm not fibbing."

"Now then, children, no quarrelling!"

"It's not me, it's Petka."

"In that case, you'll both stay in."

"No, Daddy!" Pavlik pleaded. "I give you my word I'll behave."

"And do what you're told?" Petya asked.

"Yes," Pavlik answered.

"Without fail?"

"Yes." Pavlik sounded slightly annoyed.

"Don't forget, now!" Petya said pompously and severely.

"All right, run along," Father mumbled sleepily as he curled up on the bed under the ridiculous canopy. "And for heaven's sake don't get lost," he added in a barely audible whisper.

He was snoring before Petya and Pavlik got to the bottom of the stairs.

Of course, they got lost.

Once out in the street, Petya took Pavlik by the hand. Pavlik was furious, but could not -say a thing, since he had memorized Father's saying, "If you've given your word, keep it."

The first thing was to buy a stamp. This was not as simple a matter as in Russia, where lots of shops sold postage stamps. Shops were not lacking here, but none of them sold stamps. In fact, the shopkeepers could not even understand what it was that Petya wanted, although he glibly rattled off the Italian he had learned on the ship.

"Prego, signor," Petya .said bravely, but there was a frightened look in his eyes, *"prego, signor... una, una ..."* However, he could not explain what the *"una"* he wanted was, because he did not know the word for "stamp" in Italian.

He would then pull out the envelope, spit on his finger, and give a wonderful performance of sticking an imaginary stamp on an envelope. "Don't you see, *una* stamp. *Una* stamp." At which point the shopkeeper would gesture dramatically in the true Neapolitan manner and hold forth volubly in language that left Petya bewildered. This scene was repeated about ten times, until, finally, after they had gone up and down three or four streets, the owner of a wine-vault that was bedecked inside and out with clusters of mandolin-shaped raffia-covered bottles took them to the corner and pointed far off into the distance. He accompanied the gesture by a long theatrical monologue; the only two words Petya was able to make out were *posta centrals,* that is, the central post-office.

The boys set out in the direction indicated. Petya would stop a passer-by occasionally and, bestowing a severe look on Pavlik, would ask:

"Prego, signor, la posta centrale?"

Some of the passers-by understood him, some did not, but all were eager to help the two young foreigners who wanted to buy stamps.

The Neapolitans proved to be splendid people—kind and warm-hearted, though somewhat fussy. They were not a bit like the Neapolitans of the pictures: handsome men in short trousers and wide crimson sashes with red kerchiefs on their curly heads and ravishingly beautiful women in lace mantillas.

They were very ordinary-looking people; the men wore black jackets and faded hats, the women, black blouses and no hats. All the men had one thing in common: no shirt collars—just a stud at the neck in front of their open shirts; the women wore coral ornaments.

They took the greatest interest in Petya and Pavlik, they forgot about their own affairs, and a large, noisy crowd gathered to take the boys to the post-office. The gathering stopped at every corner and had a heated discussion as to which street to take next.

They threw torrents of words at each other as they dragged the boys in different directions and if the boys had not been holding on to each other so persistently, they most certainly would have been dragged apart. More and more people joined the crowd. Ragged, olive-skinned street urchins, lively as little devils, ran before the crowd as if they were accompanying a band. An old organ-grinder with a long, foul-smelling cigar stuck under his yellow-white moustache trailed along at the end of the procession.

They were now walking down the middle of the street. People peered out of windows, curious to know what it was all about; when they found out, they, too, would gesticulate wildly, pointing out the shortest way. A kind-hearted signorina

wiped Pavlik's hot neck with her handkerchief and called him *bambino*.

Stray dogs, every bit as nasty as those in Constantinople, attached themselves to the throng. The whole business was developing into a street scandal.

Petya was becoming nervous. The only thing that kept him going was the knowledge that he, as the elder brother, was responsible to his father for Pavlik's safety. He rattled off his Italian, mixing it with French words from Margot's French textbook and Russian exclamations.

"Si, signorino, si, signorino," the Neapolitans said soothingly, seeing how excited he was.

At the same time, Petya was taking in all he could of the famous city. At first they passed through narrow, dark alleys, with iron gas-lamps on the walls of the houses. Then they suddenly came out upon a dazzling white square with a fountain and an ancient church, through the open doors of which came the solemn sounds of an organ.

Once they caught a fleeting glimpse of the unbelievably blue sea, the beach, and a row of stately, hairy date-palms in the distance. They crossed a busy shopping centre. Then they skirted a bleak monastery wall with a huge statue of a saint in a niche. They went up and down steep street stairways, past tall, narrow houses where some of the windows with green shutters were real, the others painted on for the sake of symmetry, but so expertly done that one could hardly tell the difference.

ALEXEI MAXIMOVICH

They reached a street which was blocked completely by a long row of empty tram-cars. Striking conductors and drivers, carrying their leather bags and brass keys, were walking up and down, exchanging a few words with the passers-by.

The moment the crowd accompanying the boys saw the tram-cars, they lost all interest in the young foreigners. Attention was now focussed entirely on the strikers, especially as the first rows of demonstrators, carrying red and black flags, portraits and slogans, appeared at the far end of the street.

The people rushed towards them, leaving the boys to their own devices. Pavlik grasped Petya's hand and watched the demonstrators approach.

Grim-looking bearded men in wide-brimmed hats carried a black flag with a white inscription, and portraits of other bearded men, among whom Pavlik, much to his surprise, recognized Lev Tolstoi.

Behind the bearded men came others with shaven chins and in small caps. They carried a red flag and the portraits of two more bearded men whom Petya had never seen before. These were Marx and Engels.

The people in the demonstration were workers, porters, stokers, sailors, and shop assistants. They wanted to keep in slow step, but it was no good, the more they tried, the more they quickened their pace to their natural Italian tempo.

They waved their hats and walking-sticks and shouted out slogans:

"Long live socialism! Workers of the world, unite! Down with war expenditures! Down with the government of war! We want peace!"

Passers-by joined the demonstration. Many of them were wheeling bicycles. Street vendors pushed their handcarts. The old organ-grinder had joined them, too. Everything was bathed in the rosy glow of sunset, lending a theatrical setting to the scene, but still Petya was greatly alarmed. He squeezed Pavlik's hand, and his alarm was transmitted to Pavlik.

"Petka," he shouted, "this is a revolution!"

"No, it's a demonstration," Petya said. "Who cares—let's run!"

But they were now caught up in the crowd and had no idea how to get out or which way to run.

Just then they heard loud voices behind them, speaking Russian. A number of people, including a boy Petya's age in a jacket, were elbowing their way through the crowd, closer to the marchers. The boy in the jacket had a high forehead and a duck-like nose with drops of perspiration on it; he was pushing and shoving with all his might. A thin man with a yellow moustache above a shaven chin, wearing a cream-coloured summer coat and cap all awry, apparently the boy's father, had a firm grip on his shoulder and kept repeating in a hollow bass voice:

"Take it easy, Max, take it easy!" He stretched his long, sinewy neck over the heads of the crowd and looked sharply ahead; although urging Max to take it easy, he himself, apparently, was unable to follow this advice. At times he would turn around and shout to someone behind, accenting his o's in a Nizhny-Novgorod fashion.

"Come closer, gentlemen! Come closer. Last year these anarchist-syndicalists were lying on the tracks blocking the way with their bodies, but look at them today. There's a world of difference in their tactics!"

"Yes, you're right!" a man in a pince-nez and panama replied rolling his r's and swallowing the endings of the words. "This proves my point that although Russia has become the centre of revolution since 1905, still, the consolidation of the European proletariat is progressing rapidly. I beg your pardon," he said to Petya in passing, as the sleeve of his ample jacket brushed against the boy's head.

He was followed by another Russian in a cheap, ill-fitting suit and a new felt hat on his round, firmly-set head. The new-comer had a bamboo walking-stick on his arm and forged ahead, cutting his way through the crowd with his bulging chest; he saw only the demonstrators who seemed to draw his whole being irrepressibly. His knitted eyebrows, twitching face muscles, parted lips, and small angry eyes—all seemed strangely familiar to Petya.

The arm with the bamboo cane thrust Petya aside, and the boy had a good look at the short fingers, the thick, square-cut nails, the white knuckles, and an anchor tattooed on the bulging muscle between thumb and forefinger.

Petya had no time to wonder why the little faded blue anchor seemed so familiar or who these Russians were and what they were doing here, because the crowd swayed and surged first to the right, then to the left, and Petya caught a glimpse of the three-cornered hats and narrow red stripes on the trousers of the carabineers at the far end of the street. He saw the black plumes of the *bersaglieri's* hats as they passed on the double, rifles at the ready.

A harsh, menacing bugle blast pierced the air. For a split second a hush descended on the crowd. It was broken by the sound of shattering glass, and then everything spun around in a howling, screaming, wailing, running mass.

Several shots rang out.

Petya and Pavlik were swept away by the stampede; they held hands tightly, trying to keep together. Petya forgot that they were abroad and at any minute he expected to see Cossacks gallop out of a side-street, lashing out left and right with their whips. He thought he was running down Odessa's Malaya Arnautskaya, an impression heightened by the fact that here, too, they were treading on scattered chestnuts.

Someone knocked Pavlik over. He fell and skinned his knee, but Petya pulled him to his feet and dragged him on. Pavlik was so scared that he forgot to cry, he kept repeating:

"Run! Hurry, let's run!"

Finally, they were swept into a narrow courtyard paved with worn flagstones and cluttered with dustbins. There were lovely iron grates on the ground-floor windows. The boys ran under a dirty marble archway, where each step rang and resounded like a pistol shot, and found themselves out in the street, opposite a small park on a steep slope. Several people were scrambling up the dark, weathered stones that covered the slope. This was all that was left of the crowd

that had swept them into the courtyard. The boys began to climb the slope too, but it was much steeper and higher than it had seemed. A marble lion's head jutted out of the wall, and a stream of water spurted from an iron pipe in the lion's mouth into a marble basin. Petya edged Pavlik towards the basin and tried to push him up. But Pavlik could not get a grip.

"Come on, climb up!" Petya shouted. "You clumsy ox!" Just then more people ran out of the marble gateway. These were the Russians—the boy in the short jacket and the three men Petya had seen in the crowd.

The boy was tugging his father along by the sleeve, but the father kept stopping and turning back. His fists were clenched and his cap had slid to the back of his head; a shock of yellow hair showed from under the tilted peak; his moustache bristled and his blue eyes burned with an angry fire.

"Do you want to be killed? Come on," the boy was saying, as he hung on to him tightly, "take it easy!"

"Alexei Maximovich, you're much too reckless! You have no right to take such a risk!" the man in the pince-nez said, rubbing his bruised shoulder.

"I'll be damned if I don't go back and give that long-nosed idiot in the striped trousers one in the face!" Alexei Maximovich muttered in his deep voice. "I'll teach him to respect women!" A fit of coughing reduced him to silence.

The boy in the short jacket was holding on grimly to his father's sleeve. The man with the anchor on his hand also seemed ready to dash back into the fray and restrained himself with difficulty.

"Come on, climb, Pavlik!" Petya shouted desperately. At the sound of his voice the Russians turned to him.

"Look, Russians!" the boy said.

"What are you doing here?" the man in the pince-nez said sternly.

The man with the anchor on his hand scaled the wall as nimbly as a cat, extended his bamboo cane, and helped the others up, one by one, including Petya and a tear-stained Pavlik.

It was so calm and peaceful there, it was difficult to imagine that a few moments before, somewhere nearby, soldiers and carabineers had been breaking up the demonstration, broken glass had jangled on the pavement, people had fallen, and the revolvers had barked in the streets.

Alexei Maximovich looked at Petya and Pavlik quizzically.

"Well, young gentlemen of the Russian Empire, and what may you be doing here?"

Feeling that they were now among fellow-countrymen, the boys' spirits rose. They kept interrupting each other in their haste to relate their adventures, but all the while Petya had the feeling that somehow the men— Alexei Maximovich and the one with the anchor on his hand—were familiar. No matter how he strained his memory he could not place Alexei Maximovich, but he soon remembered and recognized the other, although he could not quite believe it at first.

"Well, well, you travellers, things aren't so bad," Alexei Maximovich said. "One skinned knee for the two of you. It could have been much worse."

With these words he gathered Pavlik under his arm ' and carried him over to the fountain. He washed his knee thoroughly, bandaged it swiftly and tightly with a handkerchief, set the boy down, and told him to walk up and down.

"Fine! You can return to the ranks now. First rinse your face and paws in the

basin, though, or you'll really frighten your father. By the way, what's your name?"

"Pavlik."

"And your brother's?"

"Petya."

"Excellent. Max, come over here. I have a job for you. Take these two Apostles—Peter and Paul—to the post-office, help them buy a stamp, drop the letter in the letter-box, tell them how to get back to their hotel, and come back as fast as you can, otherwise we'll miss the boat. *Arrivederci, signori Apostles, bon voyage!"* he said, shaking hands with Petya and Pavlik. His large graceful hand was saffron-yellow from the sun.

"Merci," the well-brought-up Pavlik answered, awkwardly scraping his bandaged leg.

"Come on," the boy said, shepherding the two of them. "The post-office is only about five minutes' walk from here."

"You probably don't remember me, but I recognized you," Petya wanted to say as he went up to the man with the anchor on his hand; however, something held him back. He said nothing and looked -straight into the man's eyes. "Maybe he'll recognize me too," he thought anxiously. But the man, evidently, did not recognize him, though he noticed his blouse, fingered the material, and said:

"Where was it made?"

"In the tailor's shop of the Naval Battalion," Petya answered.

"I can see that right away. Regulation stuff!"

It seemed to Petya that there was no mirth in his chuckle.

"Come on, fellows, let's go!" the boy said. "We've got to get back to Capri."

The post-office really was a stone's throw away; however, the boys managed to talk a few things over on the way.

"What's your name?" Petya asked.

"Max."

"But Max and Moritz, seeing that, climbed the roof to get the hat," Petya recited from a well-known illustrated children's book of the day by Wilhelm Busch.

"Trying to be funny?" Max said menacingly. He was apparently sick of being teased about his name, and he dug Petya lightly in the ribs.

Of course, in other circumstances, Petya would never have let such a thing pass, but this time he decided not to make a fuss about it.

"Who's your father?" he asked, changing the subject.

"You mean you don't know my father?" Max appeared to be surprised.

"Why should I know him?" Petya asked.

"Well, because everyone seems to know him," Max mumbled in confusion. He had a bad habit of mumbling, and he always spoke as if he were sucking on a sweet.

"Who is he, then?"

"A dyer," Max answered.

"You're fibbing!" Petya said.

"Honestly, he's a dyer," Max insisted, sucking on the imaginary sweet. "Don't you believe me? Ask anyone. He's a dyer and his name is Peshkov."

"Quit fibbing! Dyers aren't like that."

"There are all kinds of dyers."

"If he's a dyer, what is he doing here, in Italy?"

"He lives here."

"Why doesn't he live in Russia?"

"Curiosity killed the cat."

There was something in the way he said the familiar phrase that reminded Petya of Gavrik, Near Mills, Terenty, and Sinichkin—of everything associated in his mind with the word "revolution." Now it had suddenly reared up before him here, in Naples, in the immobile tram-cars, the running crowd, the sound of shattering glass, the shots, the sinister blue-black plumes on the *bersaglieri's* hats, the flags, the portraits, and, finally, at the sight of the man with the anchor on his hand, for he had recognized the sailor from the *Potetnkin.*

Petya wanted to ask Max how Rodion Zhukov happened to be in Naples, about the man in the pince-nez, and what they were all doing in Italy, but at that moment they stopped outside the post-office.

"Let's have the correspondence," Max said.

"What for?" Petya asked suspiciously.

"Come on, hand it over! I haven't time to argue. Where is it going?"

"The postcard's for my aunt in Odessa, the letter's going to Paris."

"To Paris?"

"Yes."

"Then we'll send it express."

"What's express?"

"Hayseed!" Max said, making sucking noises with his tongue. "Express means express. You know, by non-stop express train. Daddy always sends his Paris letters by express. Give me the letter."

Petya hesitated for a moment, then pulled the creased envelope from his pocket. Max snatched it from him, ran over to the window, and began to speak a rapid, if lisping, Italian.

"What about the money?" Petya shouted, but instead of answering, Max kicked out his foot several times, as much as to say: keep quiet!

Two minutes later he walked over to Petya and handed him the receipt.

"What about the money?" Petya repeated.

"Silly, I send off a dozen letters every day, and 1 have a whole heap of stamps. See?" He took out a handful of stamps from his pocket. "When I stay with Dad I always post his letters for him. But how do you know Vladimir Ilyich?"

"Who's Vladimir Ilyich?" Petya asked.

"Lenin."

"Who's Lenin?"

"The man who lives in Paris on Rue Marie Rose. Ulyanov. I read the address on the envelope. The letter's for him, isn't it?"

"Sure it is!" Petya said. "But I didn't write it."

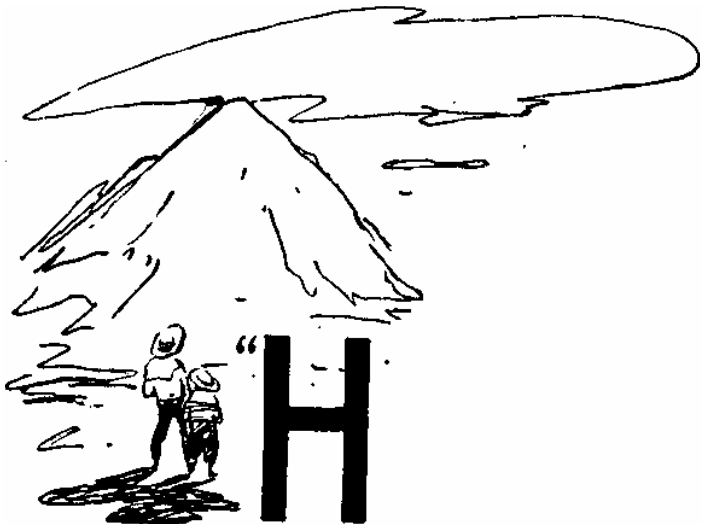
"Did your father tell you to post it?" "No. It was given to me in Odessa. I was asked to post it." And Petya blushed suddenly. Max nodded his round head.

"I know what you mean. Don't look so suspicious. We often send letters to Lenin ourselves. That is, my father writes them and I post them off. And we always send them express. Now, tell me where you are staying." "At the Hotel Esplanade."

Max frowned and that made him look more like his father than ever.

"I don't think it's very far from here. Go straight down this street till you come to a fountain, turn left, cross two more streets and you'll be right in front of your hotel. *Arrivederci,* I must run now."

He shook hands with the two boys hurriedly, crossed the street, turned the corner, and disappeared behind a painted statue of a Madonna in a niche, adorned with flowers and lemon branches with tiny green lemons on them.



VESUVIUS

and it over," Pavlik said as he winced and rubbed his knee.

"What?"

"Hand it over!" Pavlik repeated and even stretched out his hand. "Hand over half the lira."

"What are you talking about?"

' "About the lira. The one Daddy gave you for the stamp."

"Oh, so that's what you mean! Well, let me tell *you* something." And Petya put his thumb to his nose and waggled his fingers.

"That's thieving," Pavlik said, whining piteously and throwing out quick glances.

"Shut up!" Petya hissed. "All the Italians are watching us."

"I don't care! Let them all see what a thief you are!" And Pavlik wailed louder. That was too much for Petya.

"All right," he said dryly. "If that's the kind of pig you are, you can have half of it. But we'll have to get it changed first."

"No, you give me the lira, and I'll give you fifty centesimos change." Pavlik rummaged around under his blouse, felt something there, and pulled out a small silver coin.

"Where did you get that?" Petya asked severely in a good imitation of Vasily Petrovich's voice.

"I won it from the cook on the *Palermo!"* Pavlik answered not without pride.

"How many times have I told you not to gamble, you wretch!"

"Well, what about you? Who yanked all the buttons off Daddy's uniform?"

"That was when I was small."

"Well, I'm small now," Pavlik reasoned.

"Yes, and what a rat you are," Petya said angrily. "Just wait. I'll tell Daddy all about it!"

"And you'll be a telltale till you die!" Pavlik shouted triumphantly.

"Gelato! Gelato! Gelato!" a heavenly Italian tenor sang out. The boys saw an ice-cream vendor wheeling along the same kind of green box the Odessa ice-cream vendors had; the only difference was that this one was much longer, it was decorated with scenes of Naples, and had four wheels instead of two.

The boys' eyes met, and at that moment peace was restored as well as a feeling of deep affection, all based on a passionate desire to disregard Father's

iron rule; never to buy anything in the street and never, never to eat anything without permission.

They read the same burning question in each other's eyes at that instant: what was to be done if there were no one to give permission? The most natural solution was: if there is no one about, we'll have to eat without permission.

Petya, the linguist, stepped forward and opened his mouth to say something that started with the words, *"Prego, signor..."*

But the handsome young ice-cream vendor, with a hat resembling a red stocking on his curly locks, was a bright fellow. He opened the long box, and the boys were astounded to see a huge chunk of ice instead of the two familiar copper containers with tin lids. The ice-cream man took out a little steel plane and started planing the ice log. Then he packed two glasses full of ice shavings and poured an artificially bright-green liquid from a bottle over them.

The boys were fascinated. For some reason, though, it was not at all sweet, and they soon felt as if they had eaten melted water-colours.

The vendor was not wasting time. He soon had another two glasses ready; this time he poured something so dazzlingly pink over them that Pavlik turned green at the memory of the rahat-lakoum he had had in Constantinople. Petya refused the proffered ices. Using Vasily Petrovich's firm gesture, he said *"Basta!"* in faultless Italian, paid the man ten centesimos, and hauled Pavlik off without another word.

The bad taste of the strange ices was forgotten the moment the boys came to a booth snuggling against an old stone wall from which a stream of spring water flowed.

There was a basket of enormous Neapolitan lemons on the counter next to some jars of powdered sugar and tall glasses.

In a twinkling of an eye the man at the counter had sliced two lemons in half, put them through a squeezer, and caught the juice in two glasses. He added powdered sugar to the juice and deftly placed the glasses under the stream of water. They filled up with something breath-takingly pearly and foaming at the rims, and the glasses became dimmed. The boys were entranced the moment their parched lips touched the wonderful beverage.

The sun was setting. A round purple-pink evening cloud hung over the white square and the fountain. It was so vast that the people, the houses, and even the church spires seemed tiny beneath it.

There was something awe-inspiring about the beautiful scene. The boys turned left, as Max had told them, and ran homewards, but the weird light cast by the cloud made the city still more alien and unfamiliar. They could not recognize a single street.

Night was falling rapidly, although the cloud still glowed in the now purple sky. Whichever way the boys turned, it followed them, its round crimson edges peeping out from behind the roof-tops. The narrow streets were fast becoming crowded with people out for a walk, as is the custom in southern cities towards evening. The air was full of the sound of scuffing feet on the stone pavements. The heat of the day was replaced by the heat of the evening, not so dry perhaps, but more stifling.

Streaks of light fell on the pavements from the open doorways of the cafes and bars. The tinkling of mandolins drifted down from balconies. The mingled smells of hot coffee, gas, anisette, oysters, fried fish, and lemons seemed twice

as strong. Women fanned their faces, and the ice-cream vendors and news-boys sang out louder and more melodiously.

Coral-sellers mysteriously appeared in doorways. Petya felt there was something in the highest degree dangerous and sinful about their bowlers, shoved down over their sinister eyes, their sugary smiles beneath the dyed moustaches, their velvet vests and morning coats, their dark bejewelled fingers, and about the wide, flat boxes hanging round their necks on stout belts which they supported in front of them while they silently displayed their treasures to passing ladies: they held out blood-red corals, strings of smaller corals, and pale-pink ones that seemed almost white and were as big and smooth as beans; they displayed mounted Pompeii cameos and clusters of translucent gems. Set out on black velvet and illuminated by the deathly glare of the gas-lamps, the little stones gave Petya a strange impression of being tiny inanimate creatures from another planet.

Pavlik was more worried by the hostile eyes of the vendors; he thrust his hand inside his blouse, clenching his fist tightly over the small Italian coins there.

One of the side-streets seemed vaguely familiar. The boys turned the corner and ran along the flagstones up the hill. Suddenly, the houses ended and they saw Vesuvius. They had apparently approached it from another side, as it was quite different now: it had only one peak and was gigantic. They were almost alongside it. The volcano was bathed in the last rays of the dying sunset, a monstrous cap of sulphurous smoke hung over the peak, seething with the scorching heat of molten iron, and it seemed as if Vesuvius was ready to erupt at any minute. The boys ever, thought they heard an underground tremor.

They were so panic-stricken that they rushed madly downhill and bumped right into their dishevelled father, who had been searching the streets for them for the past three hours.

He was so relieved at seeing them he even forgot to scold them. They were all so exhausted after the day that they flopped on to their beds the minute they got back and did not even bother to wash up. They slept like logs, despite the impossible heat, the droning mosquitoes, and the noises and music coming from the street all night long.

A CINDER

Next morning marked the beginning of an exciting and delightful life which swept them up and whirled them through cities and hotels until, a month and a half later, utterly worn out, the travellers recrossed the Russian border and found themselves home once more.

Although they had followed a well-planned route, whenever Petya looked back on that journey it always seemed to him to have been a mad jumble of unrelated travelling impressions, of beautiful scenery, palaces, fountains, squares and, of course, museums.

The Bacheis had too little money to allow themselves the luxury of stopping somewhere along the route for an extra day to rest up, look around, and gather their thoughts and impressions.

For instance, they spent only three days in Naples, but into those three days they crammed: a boat trip to the Isle of Capri to see the famous Blue Grotto and, on the way hack, a walk round Sorrento and Castellamrnare; a visit to the site of the excavations at Pompeii and to Vesuvius, climbing nearly as high as the crater; they went to practically every museum, art gallery, and church in Naples, including the famous Aquarium, where the boys beheld the magic of the submarine world behind the glass cases, illuminated from above like the stage of a unique theatre. There, in the Mediterranean Sea water, among the white coral trees and polyps which resembled blue and red chrysanthemums, giant lobsters crawled over lovely sea-shells and fish swam up and down like interplanetary dirigibles that had reached Mars from the Earth.

As they sat in the stuffy railway carriage, about ready to leave Naples for Rome, Vasily Petrovich looked out of the window and said with some uncertainty:

"If I'm not mistaken, that's Alexei Maximovich Gorky." He adjusted his pince-nez, leaned out of the window, and began to scrutinize someone. "Gorky!" he exclaimed confidently.

Petya stuck his head out under his father's arm. A rather large group of people were strolling down the platform. They were carrying travelling bags and speaking loudly in Russian. Petya immediately singled out the tall, slightly stooped figure of the man who had recently bandaged Pavlik's knee.

Now he knew why the man had seemed so familiar, for he had often seen his photographs in magazines and on postcards. It was Gorky, the famous writer. Petya also spotted the sailor carrying a cheap suitcase.

A woman in mourning passed, accompanied by a girl of about thirteen,

evidently her daughter. He caught a glimpse of a small face with serious eyes and lips pressed tightly together in grief, a dark chestnut braid tied with a black ribbon and thrown over a thin shoulder.

Then the train pulled out, and the group on the platform slipped backward. Petya had a last glimpse of Gorky, the sailor, the woman, and the girl. They were standing beside a train at the other side of the platform. Apparently, some of the party were leaving, and the others were seeing them off.

"Gorky! Gorky!" Petya yelled, waving his hat.

The girl turned and looked at Petya. Their eyes met. At that instant a cloud of acrid smoke enveloped him. Petya shut his eyes, but he was not quick enough, for a tiny cinder flew into[1] his eye and became lodged under the upper lid.

The subsequent torment killed all the pleasure of the journey from Naples to Rome.

A nail in your shoe or a cinder in your eye! We have all suffered from these evils at one time or other. It starts as a slightly unpleasant feeling and gradually drives the victim frantic with pain.

At first Petya was just uncomfortable from the alien body lodged in his eye. The eye was watery and he was certain the tears would wash the cinder out and bring a feeling of blessed relief. But the tears kept streaming down his face, while the cinder stayed put. It was lodged way up under the lid and scratched and irritated the eyeball at the slightest movement.

Blinded by tears and feeling that his eye was on fire, Petya rushed up and down the stuffy carriage, not knowing what to do. In his agony he bumped into the other passengers. He bruised his knee, but the new pain could not eliminate the old one.

Father insisted he sit quietly and not rub his eye under any circumstances, for then the cinder would wash out by itself. But it did not. Petya began to rub his eye again; the pain became unbearable. He moaned, screamed, and in his despair beat out a tattoo on the floor with his heels. With shaking hands Father tried to raise the eyelid and get at the cinder with the tip of his handkerchief. Petya would not let him. He kept running back and forth to the wash-room, where he would pour some tepid water from the wash-basin into his cupped palm and bathe his eye in it. Nothing helped. It was infinitely worse than a toothache.

In the rare moments when the pain subsided, Petya saw dry, barren hills, white dust on the highway, level crossings and little huts of the trackmen behind rickety fences made of old sleepers and surrounded by sunflowers, hollyhocks, and dirty pigs; all these flashed by the carriage windows in the glare of the Italian noon. Were it not for the groves of lovely Italian pines, their spreading branches and almost black needles, one would think the train was approaching a town in the Ukraine instead of Rome.

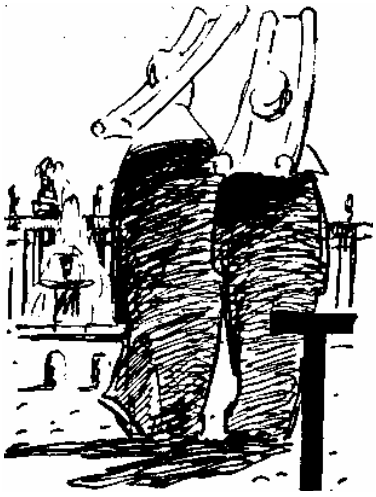
All this was bleary and flitting, there was but one impression, one scene that remained constant: the railway platform in Naples, the group of people, the woman in mourning, and the girl with the black ribbon in her chestnut hair. She was embedded in his mind as the cinder in his eye.

All things eventually come to an end. Petya's torment ended too. An old Italian woman with a coral cross on her wrinkled neck sat at the far end of the carriage. FOT baggage she had a wicker basket with ducks' heads poking through the top; she had been reading her prayer-book throughout the journey, but she had missed nothing of what was going on in the carriage. When Petya for the

tenth time rushed to the wash-room to bathe his eye, she suddenly reached out and grabbed him with her strong, knotty hands, forced him down on the bench, got hold of his head, and drew it towards her dark, hairy, witch-like face.

Without a word she raised his eyelid with nimble fingers, opened her hot mouth, stuck out her long tongue, and licked the cinder that had been rubbed into the mucous membrane. Petya instantly felt a wave of relief. The old woman picked the cinder off her tongue, held it triumphantly between two fingers for all to see, and said something in Italian; the sentence was greeted with applause, making the ducks quack boisterously.

Then she kissed Petya on the head, crossed him from left to right, and returned to her prayer-book.



THE ETERNAL CITY

The train pulled into Rome. Three wandering musicians—a mandolin, guitar, and violin — played their last piece. Thus, to the strains of "Santa Lucia" and the grating of brakes, they came to a stop.

Again the Bacheis were surrounded by a noisy crowd of agents and guides as they made their way to an ancient phaeton. The driver cracked his long whip over the nags, turned the handle of a Large meter attached to the side of the box, and they jogged off over the sun-scorched squares of Rome, past spouting fountains that left greenish strips on the paving stones and, like the needles of a compass, pointed in the direction of the prevailing south wind. After his recent torture Petya sat back and took his fill of the sights. It seemed as if his eyesight had improved threefold. He kept turning this way and that, so as not. to miss a single detail of the famous city.

The lean driver in a squashed black felt hat smothered them in clouds of foul smoke from his long cigar. Instead of taking the shortest route to the hotel, he zigzagged through every street in the city. The centesimos in the window of the meter mounted, rapidly turning into lire; to distract their attention from the meter, the driver, with a theatrical gesture, called out the sights. They passed the Caracalla thermae, St. Angel's Castle, the Tiber, the Forum, St. Peter's, and the Coliseum.

Father spread out a map of Rome on his lap. One would think he could not believe his eyes and was seeking *a* theoretical confirmation of the obvious fact of the existence of the city of Rome and all its famous landmarks, so well known from paintings and photographs.

The real Rome was not as magnificent as the descriptions and paintings. Monotonously lighted by the sun, wilted from the heat, it lay spread out on its ancient hills beneath the pale-blue sky and seemed much simpler and more beautiful than one had imagined.

The summer streets were deserted. Papal guards stood watch at the entrance to Vatican City. They wore uniforms of the Middle Ages and were armed with halberds. Pavlik, who had been to the Opera with Auntie during the previous winter, now shouted at the top of his voice:

"Look! Look! Huguenots!"

Before Petya could clap his hand over his brother's mouth he shrilled still louder, bubbling over with joy and surprise:

"Donbasilios! Look, Donbasilios!"

True enough, two Catholic priests were making their way through the colonnade of St. Peter's. They wore black soutanes and long hats with the brims

rolled up, and carried umbrellas under their arms; no two men could have looked more like Don Basilio from *The 'Barber of Seville* than they.

Several monks crossed the square. A barefoot Franciscan went by, wearing a crude hair-shirt tied with a cord, for all the world like an ancient prophet. Plump, jolly Benedictines strolled along, telling their beads, and the sun shone on their tonsures.

Black-robed nuns passed with lowered heads; they had weird-looking, huge, snow-white, firmly-starched, light-as-a-feather batiste head-dresses.

A little grey donkey pulled a cart. The cart was at least eight feel high and had solid wooden wheels that creaked as loudly as the first primitive carts must have creaked, bringing to Petya's mind a picture of Hannibal's baggage train, moving through the dust at the golden gates of Rome.

Just then a carriage on springs, harnessed tandem with four black horses, flew out of a side-street. The spokes of the wheels spun round, flashing like lightning in the sun. A behatted cardinal reclined on the leather cushions. Petya caught a glimpse of his bluish cheeks, heavy eyebrows, and haughty, cruel eyes, pencilled like an actor's.

The cardinal surveyed the Bachei family and the old driver, who had whipped the hat off his bald head and folded his hands piously. There was no telling just what it was the prince of the church thought, but he smiled cordially, freed his thin rosary-entwined hand from his lace cuff and, without drawing his fingers together, by an imperceptible movement of his palm, blessed the travellers. His purple robe flashed past and the carriage vanished, leaving a faint odour of incense in its wake.

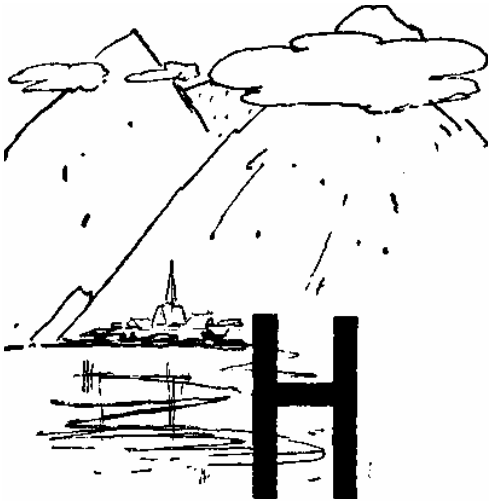
Two weeks later, having crossed and recrossed Italy from one end to the other, the tourists found themselves in Switzerland, strictly in keeping with Vasily Petrovich’s plan. They decided to stop and rest for a bit before setting out once more.

To tell the truth, they had had enough of changing trains and being on the go all the time, but it was almost impossible to stop now, for Father had been tempted to buy some very reasonable special tickets from a travel agency in Milan, that entitled them to travel without extra cost on any railway in Switzerland they cared to within a period of sixty days.

Sixty days was too much as far as the Bacheis were concerned, since the summer holidays would be over in a month and a half. However, the tickets were valid for sixty days, and what they lost in time they made up on Pavlik, as they had given his age as seven and bought only two full-fare third-class tickets for the three of them.

It was cheating, even if petty, and before Vasily Petrovich agreed to go through with it he stood for a long time wiping the glasses of his pince-nez in embarrassment and twisting his neck from side to side. But in the end the tickets were bought and stamped with the date of purchase, thus marking the beginning of a strange, restless period when they felt that every day not spent in a railway carriage was ruinous to their finances.

However, they just *had* to stop for a rest.



ON THE SHORES OF LAKE GENEVA

ere they were, sitting in wicker chairs on the open terrace of a small, inexpensive boarding-house in Ouchy on the shore of Lake Geneva. Tiers of hotels, parks, and church spires rose on a slant to the rear of them and disappeared into the clear sky over Lausanne. A strip of sky-blue water, dotted with winged sails and gulls, shone through the pleasant green of the gardens and vineyards. Savoy lay before them across the lake, veiled in a haze of sunshine; there were velvety meadows, gorges, and valleys adorned by tiny picturesque villages, and above it all, the wild mountain range that stretched right across the horizon.

Mont Blanc was supposed to be somewhere in the vicinity, but Vasily Petrovich tried in vain to locate it through his little opera-glasses, for the outline of the range was obscured by clouds. This was all the more disappointing since their room was one "with a view of Mont Blanc."

A middle-aged chamber-maid wished the travellers *ban matin* and set a *tray—the complet—on* the table. It consisted of a tea-set, a straw basked of tiny bits of toast, butter curls, jam and honey; there was also a sugar-bowl with midget dominoes of sugar so brittle they had to be picked up gingerly with sugar tongs, as they crumbled at the slightest pressure.

Vasily Petrovich put on his pince-nez and examined the strange, yellowish sugar closely. Then he picked up a cube, smelled it, tasted it, and announced that this was real cane-sugar.

Cane-sugar! The discovery astounded the boys. Petya was especially excited, for he visualized Auntie's amazement and his friends' jealousy when they found out that he had seen real cane-sugar with his own eyes and had even had some in his tea, while sitting on a terrace "with a view of Mont Blanc." That was worth writing about. He pulled out his stationery box, but the Swiss morning was so heavenly, the stillness so breath-taking, and the bees hung over the honey pot so motionlessly, that Petya suddenly found he could not move a finger, let alone begin writing.

He now realized how dead tired he was and how badly he needed a rest.

Scenes of Italy kept flashing through his mind chaotically. He saw St. Mark's and the lion with its paw on a stone Bible sharply outlined against the intensely blue sky, and that was Venice. Then light-blue double-decked tram-cars rounded the beautiful square and the white marble lace-like cathedral, adorned by two thousand Gothic statues, and that was Milan. He saw himself in a cloud of dry white dust passing the marble quarries of Carrara where huge marble panels,

cubes, slabs, and chunks that had just been sawn lay in piles ready for shipment; finally, the many-tiered graceful Tower of Pisa leaning motionlessly to one side.

Once their train had stopped at a remote siding in the middle of a hot, beautiful valley, and they could see the cloudy purple mountain range on the horizon and feel the slight breath of chill Alpine air. Suddenly, they dived into the Simplon tunnel, twenty-two miles through the heart of a mountain; there was a sudden darkness, the stale smell of coal, the deafening clamour of steel, and the black mirrored surfaces of the locked carriage windows which reflected the sinister, ghastly dimness of the flickering electric lights in the carriages.

And then, after an endless half-hour of depressing, motionless, headlong movement, when it seemed as if there was no air left to breathe and there would never be an end to the infernal darkness pressing in on every side on the train and the two exhausted engines, then, suddenly, there came the dazzling rush of daylight, the clatter of falling window-sashes, the refreshing breeze that tore through the carriages from the Rhone Valley and blew away the stale smells of the tunnel. Mountains. Glaciers. Valleys. Wooden chalets with huge round cheeses on the roofs. Herds of red and black Swiss cows and the melodious clack, instead of tinkle, of the flat wooden bells in the sunny calm of the station, the white cross on the red Swiss flag, and a St. Bernard on a huge poster advertising Suchard Chocolate.

Petya was now in a new country, a lovely, toy country.

The voices of people arguing drifted up to them from the terrace below.

They were speaking Russian. At the sound of his native tongue Petya sat up and listened.

"You cannot ignore the main thesis adopted unanimously at the January meeting of the Central Committee," a woman said in a shrill voice, stressing the words "ignore" and "meeting."

"I'm not ignoring it, but..." a man's voice objected softly, with a veiled note of irony in the clear baritone.

"You're wrong, sir. You *are* either ignoring it or pretending not to ignore it."

"Where's your proof?"

"The January meeting was absolutely clear as to the true nature of Social-Democratic work," a second male voice suddenly joined in. It was the deep, angry voice of an old smoker who was constantly clearing his throat and spitting.

"Now, now," the sarcastic baritone said.

The woman's voice became shriller:

"Denial of the illegal Social-Democratic party, belittling its role and its meaning, attempts to shorten the programme, tactical aims and slogans of revolutionary Social-Democracy testify to the influence of the bourgeoisie on the proletariat."

Vasily Petrovich jumped at the words "revolutionary Social-Democracy" and "proletariat" which had been spoken so loudly that they carried across the garden. He looked at the children anxiously.

The woman's voice persisted:

"There are people who discard such basic slogans of revolutionary Marxism as the hegemony of the working class in the fight for socialism and a democratic revolution!"

"Does that mean me?"

"Yes, it does. You and those like you."

"God knows what's going on here!" Vasily Petrovich mumbled, and his nose became white from excitement. "Children, go inside this minute!"

But Petya, burning with curiosity, was hanging over the balustrade, trying to see what was going on on the terrace below.

Through the green ivy-covered lattice he saw a table with a pitcher of milk on it and several people sitting around in wicker chairs: an angry-faced woman in a black jacket who looked like a school-teacher, a consumptive young man in a cotton shirt and a worn coat, and a good-looking gentleman in a tussore jacket, with a shiny, steel-rimmed pince-nez on his fleshy Roman nose, through which, at that very moment, the words "now, now," were being forced sarcastically.

"You and those like you are the backers of Stolypin's 'workers' party' and exponents of bourgeois influence on the proletariat, with your call for a so-called legal or open workers' party!" the woman continued, rapping the table sharply with her knuckles.

"That's right. Exponents of genuine bourgeois influence," the consumptive young man rattled off in a hollow voice, as he choked in a fit of coughing and spat, then struck a match with shaking hands. "And your 'open' workers' party while Stolypin is running things simply means desertion on the part of those who have renounced the aims of the revolutionary struggle of the masses against autocracy, the Third Duma, and all that Stolypin stands for!"

This was too much for Vasily Petrovich. He grabbed Petya by the shoulders and shoved him into the room, saying:

"Never listen to such things! Stay right here! Pavlik, come in at once! My God, why must we suffer this! Politics, politics everywhere!"

, When the boys were settled in the room, Vasily Petrovich went out on the terrace and shouted to the people below in a voice that trembled with rage:

"I would ask you to choose your words more carefully! At least, you can refrain from shouting. Remember, there are children here."

The people down below stopped talking. Then a nasal voice staid:

"Comrades, we are being spied upon." His words were followed by a scraping of chairs, and the woman's voice said:

"There's your 'open' party for you! Why, we aren't safe from the tsar's spies even in free Switzerland!"

"I say!" Vasily Petrovich shouted threateningly, and he flushed an angry red.

However, the glass door downstairs was slammed demonstratively; a confused Vasily Petrovich muttered, "A fine state of affairs, this!" went into his room, and slammed his door just as demonstratively.

"Daddy, they're Russians, aren't they?" Pavlik whispered. "Are they anarchists?"

"Don't be silly, they're Social-Democrats!" Petya said.

"I didn't ask you. Daddy, what are they doing here?"

"Stop asking stupid questions!" Father said impatiently. "And stop worrying about things that don't concern you," he added, looking straight at Petya.

"But, Daddy," Pavlik persisted, "they're Russians, like us, aren't they?"

"Yes, yes, they're Russians all right, but they're emigres. Let's have no more of this," he concluded dryly.

"What are emigres? Are they people who are against the tsar?"

"That's enough!" Father barked resolutely.

And so, the political discussion was ended. That was the last they saw of the

emigres on the floor below.

EMIGRES AND TOURISTS

The episode made a big impression on Petya. Again his thoughts turned to that strange phenomenon known as "the Russian revolution." His thoughts were of Russia and the Russians.

Until then he had taken it for granted that all Russians—no matter whether they were rich or poor, peasants or workers, officials or merchants, officers or soldiers—were loyal subjects of His Majesty, the Emperor. It was a concept that was as natural to him as the fact that the Black Sea was a large mass of salt water or that the sky was a mass of blue air.

But the familiar concept received a jolt during their travels when, to Petya's surprise, they began to encounter not a few Russians.

He noticed that all Russians abroad were divided into two categories: tourists and emigres. The tourists were wealthy, very wealthy, and the Bachei family never really came in contact with them, because they travelled first-class on the railways and -ships, stayed at fabulously expensive hotels, dined on the terraces of fashionable restaurants and, for their outings, they hired the best carriages, thoroughbred riding horses, and automobiles that were far more elegant than the one owned by the Ptashnikov brothers, which, until then, Petya had considered a miracle, the pinnacle of wealth and luxury.

No matter where these Russian tourists appeared, they were always surrounded, in Petya's eyes, by an aura of wealth and luxury. They travelled in families, with well-dressed children, accompanied by governesses, companions, travel agents and guides that were as pompous and impressive as ministers.

The males were well-groomed, the females squeamish, there were young girls and young gallants, women whose age told and elegant old gentlemen who smelled of strange perfumes and expensive cigars.

Sometimes, in the cool semi-darkness of an art gallery or among the scorching ruins of an ancient theatre, the Bacheis would find themselves standing next to these people, but even here an invisible wall separated them and made closer contact entirely out of the question. In their presence Petya smarted under the humiliating feeling of shame, if not for his family's poverty, then, at all events, for their lack of worldly things.

Secretly, he was mortified by his father's shabby suit, his down-at-heel shoes, cheap straw hat, and celluloid collar and cuffs which Father carefully cleaned every night and then washed in soap suds. Petya hated himself for this feeling of shame, but he could not overcome it. He felt all the more humiliated because he knew his father was secretly just as ashamed as he was. In the presence of the

wealthy tourists, Father's face took on a strained expression of indifference, his beard twitched and his hands made imperceptible movements, so that the edges of his cuffs crawled up out of sight into his coat sleeves.

But most humiliating of all was that the wealthy Russians seemed never to notice the presence of the Bacheis.

They would simply stop talking Russian and switch casually to another language — French, Italian, or English — and continue their conversation as naturally and easily as if they had been speaking Russian.

The pictures of the great masters, which Vasily Petrovich regarded with bowed head and tears in his eyes, they examined from various angles through lorgnettes and from under their hands, commenting knowingly and admiring them in a dignified manner.

They beheld the ruins of an ancient theatre with such looks on their faces as if they expected a Greek chorus to appear and ancient actors in masks to stage a tragedy for their benefit.

It seemed as if everything there belonged to them, on the basis of some ancient immutable law. And Petya felt that they were truly the masters of everything. The whole world was theirs, or, at least, belonged to their kind, and as for Russia—it certainly was theirs.

That is why the second category of Russians abroad, the emigres, seemed all the more a strange group to him. They were the exact opposite of the tourists.

These were poor, shabbily dressed intellectuals. They travelled third-class, went on foot, and lived in the smallest, cheapest boarding-houses. Thus, the Bacheis were in constant contact with them, and Petya was soon able to form a very definite opinion of them.

These were men and women like those the Bacheis encountered at the boarding-house in Ouchy. They were preoccupied with politics. Petya often heard them say various "political" words rather loudly, much to Vasily Petrovich's dismay.

They were for ever arguing, heedless of their surroundings: at the railway station when seeing friends off, in the mountains near a waterfall that covered the trembling ferns with fine spray, at dinner, in a museum while examining hollow boulders sawed in half and full of gleaming purple crystals of amethyst.

The emigres, in Petya's opinion, were all possessed by a single idea. Petya understood that it was a matter of politics, but could only guess vaguely at what exactly it was all about. He knew that they were "against the autocracy." And if they were constantly on the go, it was not because they were touring, but because they *had* to go, in the interests of their "common cause."

Once, in Geneva, the Bacheis came upon a rather large group of emigres on a little island, near the Rousseau monument. Black swans swam on the lake, and the bronze Rousseau, an old man with a haggard, passionate face, sat in his bronze chair watching them as they plunged their graceful necks under the water and snatched savagely at the pieces of bread thrown to them from the daintily painted boats. While Vasily Petrovich was standing, bare-headed, before the statue of the writer and philosopher whom he had worshipped since student days, Petya heard the loud voices of the emigres. They were sitting in the shade of the willows, targuing as usual. Suddenly, Petya heard a familiar name: Ulyanov.

"Ulyanov-Lenin is in Paris now, isn't he?"

"Yes, he lives in Longjumeau."

"There *is* a Party school there, I believe?"

"Yes. Lenin lectures to Party workers there on political economy, the agrarian question, and the theory and practice of socialism."

"What's his attitude towards the Capri school?"

"Utterly irreconcilable, of course."

"After his resolution on the situation in the Party—it was adopted at the meeting of the Paris second group for assistance to the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party—you can be sure he will never agree to any compromise."

"I haven't read the resolution."

"It's at the printer's already."

"What about Plekhanov?"

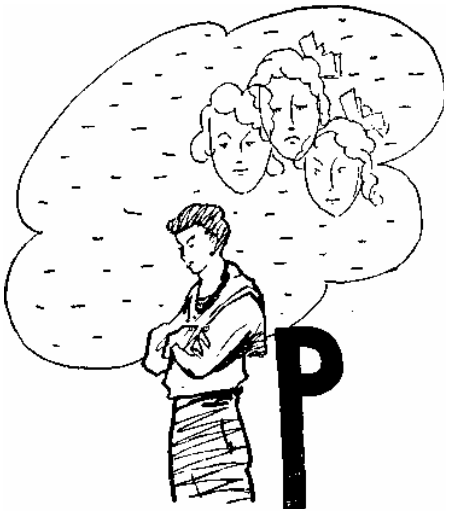
"Well, Plekhanov will always be Plekhanov."

"So you think—"

"I always thought and think now that there is only one line of action open to the Russian revolution, and that is Lenin's line. And the sooner all of us realize this, the sooner the Russian revolution will become a reality."

Petya suddenly felt that the emigres, whom until then he had always regarded as a bunch of eccentrics, forced into exile after the unsuccessful revolution of 1905, were a force to be taken seriously. Why, they had Party schools, central committees, assistance groups, and held special meetings. They even printed their resolutions. Apparently, far from giving in after the defeat of the 1905 Revolution, many of them were now working hard preparing for another revolution. They had a leader too — Lenin-Ulyanov, probably the one Gavrik's letter was for. Petya had heard the name Ulyanov several times already. He tried to picture this man who lived in a place called Longjumeau, near Paris, preparing a new revolution in Russia.

Now, whenever Petya saw Russian emigres in a railway carriage or at a station, he was certain they were going to Paris, to Ulyanov's Party school. Of course, that was where the emigres Gorky was seeing off at the station in Naples were going, including the woman in mourning and the girl who had looked at Petya so severely at the very moment the train had pulled out of the station and the cinder had flown into his eye.



LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

Petya could not get the girl out of his mind. Strange as it might seem, he often thought of her with a bitter feeling of loneliness, and in his heart he reproached her for appearing so suddenly and as suddenly disappearing, as if she were to blame. He exaggerated the meaning of the look that had passed between them.

He had already read Turgenev, Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Times,* Tolstoi's *War and Peace,* and, it goes without saying, Pushkin's *Yevgeny Onegin,* and most of Goncharov. Although Vasily Petrovich, who chose the books his boys read, had emphasized the social significance of these classical works, Petya was captivated by an entirely different aspect, namely: romance.

He literally devoured the pages devoted to love, and leafed through the rest, which were full of "social significance," or, as Vasily Petrovich put it, "the gist of the book." For Petya the gist of the book were the love scenes.

He was a sensitive boy, given to day-dreaming, and the exalted love in the Russian novels held him in thrall. However, that was theory, and it did not seem to have its counterpart in reality. "Love at first sight" or "cold indifference," when applied to a girl from the fourth form in a black school pinafore and a felt hat with a green school bow, and carrying an oilcloth satchel in her small hands, was a hopeless occupation, since the girl would but smile coyly at his efforts, unable to appreciate what it was all about.

Nevertheless, Petya often drifted off into a day-dream, and then he would become Pechorin or Onegin or Mark Volokhov, although, actually, he was really much more like Grushnitsky, Lensky, or Raisky.

Needless to say, all the girls he knew would then be transformed into Marys, Tatyanas, and Veras, all of them lovely and all unhappy, a fact which fed his vanity. However, the girls concerned rarely had any idea of what was going on in his head and looked on him as a queer and conceited boy.

At first, their travelling impressions had been so all-consuming- that Petya had had no time to think of love. But then, a tiny cinder had flown in his eyes, marking the beginning of a new romance.

It was "love at first sight." Petya had no doubt about that, although he had yet to make up his mind who she was and who he himself was. Since the thing had taken place in a foreign country, Turgenev would be the closest parallel. She might be Asya, or, stretching the point a bit, Gemma from *Spring Torrents.*

There were several pros to these selections, as Petya, in the role of the main hero, was the object of their ardent and devoted love.

Petya's intuition told him that actually she was neither Gemma nor Asya. In fact, she was more the Tatyana type. But he rejected Tatyana, for then he would have to be Onegin, and that in no way satisfied his need for mutual love.

Nor would Princess Mary or Bela do, simply because Petya was tired of being Pechorin, a role he had abused considerably in recent times.

Vera, the heroine of Goncharov's *The Precipice,* was best suited. There was something mysterious and wilful about her, too. In this case he would be Mark Volokhov, as he was definitely opposed to the role of the luckless Raisky. That settled it. It was not a bad choice at all, especially since he had never yet been Mark Volokhov.

No sooner had Petya settled on Mark Volokhov and Vera than he suddenly decided the mysterious netherworld kiss of Klara Milieh was exactly what he wanted. She, then, would be Klara Milieh. What could be better? However, just then an inner voice whispered that this, too, was untrue.

Meanwhile, love could not wait, it would not stand the loss of a single minute. Petya finally compounded all the women characters in his favourite books, retaining Klara Milich's nether-world kiss and adding the black bow and the chestnut braid, and found at last his own "true love," the' girl of his dreams—tender, faithful, and loving, whom Fate had given him for one fleeting moment and then had snatched away so cruelly.

Petya's soul was filled with longing. A strange feeling of loneliness never left him. He loved this feeling and, far from spoiling his trip across Switzerland, it seemed somehow to enhance it.

He was no longer Pechorin, or Onegin, or Mark Volokhov. He was himself, but he had changed and suddenly matured.

Vasily Petrovich was rather worried at the change that had come over Petya, transforming him before his very eyes from a boy into a youth. He felt that his son was experiencing something novel and attributed it to the mass of new impressions. Perhaps, that really *was* the cause of it. But he had no idea of the state Petya's soul was in as a result of a too vivid imagination. He would sometimes come over to him, look into his eyes, and run his big veined hand through the boy's hair.

"How are things, my little Petya?" he would ask fondly.

At which Petya, who was pretty close to tears of self-pity, would hold him off and say glumly:

"I'm not little."

Whenever the opportunity offered, Petya would look at himself in the mirror, trying to assume a grim, manly expression. He began brushing his hair a new way to keep the cow-licks down, using his father's brush and dousing it generously with water.

A STORM IN THE MOUNTAINS

At Petya's insistence they bought woollen capes and alpenstocks in Interlaken. Then Petya began to drop hints about a green Tyrol hat with a pheasant feather and spiked shoes. But Father was so careful of every centime that he flatly refused and became angry as well.

Petya would not part with his cape even on the hottest days; he did not wear it in the usual way, but threw one end over his shoulder in the classical Spanish manner. If Pavlik's cape looked like a modest pelerine, Petya's most certainly was transformed into a cloak.

Pavlik trailed his long purple-barked staff artlessly; Petya leaned on his as if it were a shepherd's crook.

At times he would smile sadly, walk away and stand on a cliff all alone, peering down at a tiny village and lovely little church at the bottom of a valley.

Once he talked Father into climbing a mountain in. had weather, when the automatic barometer on Fluelen Square was etching a sinister, uneven line on the paper ribbon of a barely moving spool.

"It's misty on top and there's a blizzard, we won't be able to see a thing, and we'll only waste our money on the funicular," Father said. To his horror, he had just found out that their special tickets did not include trips on the funicular.

Petya used every means of persuasion to make his father see that mountain-climbing on sunny days was a dull business, for there was nothing of interest except tiresome snow-capped peaks and the glaciers, and that it was much more interesting in bad weather, when all the other tourists sought the comfort of their hotel rooms, and when one could actually see a real snow-storm in July.

"No one but us will be seeing it!" Petya insisted.

And he had his way. They set out in the slanting, stepped carriage of the electric funicular, which pulled them upwards at a practically vertical angle.

Of course, they were alone in the carriage. For some time they crept up a steep slope covered by pine woods which were later replaced by firs. The trees floated *downwards* diagonally and so Petya first saw the roots and then the pointed crowns hung with cones; they kept getting smaller until they vanished out of sight in the haze of the hot July day.

There were foaming waterfalls lost among the ferns.

It was getting cooler. The tree belt ended. The last station was crawling down towards them. It was a spotless little house with a moist roof. The Bacheis descended from the carriage, Vasily Petrovich leafed through his Baedeker, and they set out on foot up the mountain, winding their way among black boulders covered with silvery fungi.

There were signs of mist everywhere. It was hard going over the slippery quartz pebbles, especially in leather-soled sandals. The stony ground was overgrown with creeping Alpine roses and cyclamens. Suddenly, Petya found his first edelweiss among the clumps of damp moss. It was a strange, star-shaped, dead-looking flower that seemed to be cut out of white cloth. Petya pinned the flower to his chest by sticking the stem in the collar of his blouse.

The horizon was very high and near now, and a grey mist rolled towards them. Everything was suddenly wrapped in gloom: they had entered a cloud. It became very chilly. In a second their woollen capes turned white from the mist. Darkness enveloped them. A biting wind blew stinging, icy rain into their faces.

Vasily Petrovich insisted that they turn back immediately, but Petya continued climbing higher, gathering his cape round him and tapping the steel point of his alpenstock on the wet stones.

The cold became more intense.

First wet and then dry snow-flakes appeared among the raindrops. In an instant the rain had turned into a snow-storm.

"Come back! Come back this minute!" Father shouted.

Petya did not hear him. He was enraptured by the grim beauty of a summer blizzard. He ran to the edge of the cliff that usually offered a magnificent view of the entire range, including the Monte Rosa, Jungfrau, and the Matterhorn.

Nothing could be seen of them now. The snow swirled overhead, underfoot, and on every side of him, covering the flowers and boulders with a white blanket.

"All that money thrown away," Father muttered, trying to catch a glimpse of the famous mountains.

"Oh, Dad, you don't understand a thing!" Petya protested. "Don't you see, it's summer down there, and it's hot, while we — we're in the middle of a snow-storm! Wasn't it worth coming up here for that alone?"

"So it's summer down there and winter up here. A perfectly natural thing. What's so extraordinary about that' You're in the mountains, you know. You're just a dreamer."

Petya was covered with snow, there were snow-flakes on his eyebrows and eyelashes as he stood with his arms folded on his chest and his cape flying in the wind. He was lost in melancholy rapture at the thought of the girl who had been so cruelly snatched away from him and taken off to Paris. He was filled with his unrequited love and loneliness, although in his heart of hearts he was exultant as he pictured himself standing there, suffering, forsaken by all, with an edelweiss pinned to his chest and a crude Alpine cape that could never protect him from the cold flung over his shoulders.

"Enough! We've had enough of the beautiful view!" Father grumbled. "Before you know it you'll both be down with pneumonia."

"So what! Who cares?" Petya answered, but he was glad to turn his back on the piercing wind and run downhill after Pavlik.

On the way back to the funicular they came upon a shepherd's hut—a real Swiss chalet with stones on the flat roof. They warmed up and dried their clothes at the fireside and an old Swiss woman gave them three tall narrow glasses of cold goat's milk for a small coin.

As Vasily Petrovich was sipping the milk he was thinking: how wonderful it is here, how quiet! How restful! Perhaps, this is what happiness really means:

living on a small plot, in a small hut, breeding cows, making cheese, breathing the clear mountain air, and not feeling yourself a slave ,of any government, religion, or society. Rousseau, that great hermit and sage, was absolutely right. These thoughts had flitted through his tired brain before, but now they became amazingly clear. They were as tangible and visible as the drops of milk that glistened in his damp beard.

To tell the truth, Petya was really pleased when the funicular lowered them slowly into the warm, sunlit valley and the strange excursion came to an end, On the whole, they were satisfied with it.

"Ah-hh, it was well worth while," Vasily Petrovich said as he rubbed his hands. "We saw real edelweiss in its natural surroundings!"

Pavlik, although wont to conceal his feelings, was as pleased as Punch. He fussed around secretively in a corner of their hotel room, hiding something carefully as he rummaged around in the rucksack, banging and knocking whatever it was. As it later turned out, he had not wasted his time while in' Switzerland. Hawing seen quite a few precious stones and crystals in the shop windows, found, so it was said, in the surrounding mountains, the boy decided he could make his fortune if only he kept his eyes peeled on the ground during their excursions—treasure was just lying around, waiting to be picked up. So he had secretly filled his rucksack with stones he considered to be of especial value. Today, while Petya stood lost in his romantic reverie and Father was busy exploring the Alpine flora, Pavlik had found two rather large round stones. He was certain they were packed full of amethysts. All he had to do was saw them in half, and out would come a pile of precious stones. Pavlik was a cautious boy and decided to postpone this operation till he got home. Once there, he would sell his gems on the quiet and make his life's dream come true, that is, buy a second-hand bicycle.

From that day on Petya began to dream of Paris with renewed passion. He had a strange premonition that he would see "her" there, and the meeting would be the beginning of a new, incredibly happy existence.

Paris was included in their itinerary, but before starting out they had to make the best use of their special railway tickets and see as much of Switzerland as they could.

Actually, they were rather fed up with Switzerland, with its cheeses, milk, chocolate, boarding-houses, funiculars. collections of minerals, wooden toys, and beautiful views—all so very much alike wherever they went.

They could not back out now: after all, they did not want to waste the money they had spent on the tickets! And so they continued riding and changing trains in every conceivable direction for the sole purpose of realizing their investment.

They stood around a deep pit in Bern, watching the famous bears walk back and forth on their hind legs, begging for titbits.

On a green meadow on the outskirts of Lucerne they saw a huge yellow dirigible, on which the words "Villa Lucerne" were inscribed.

They were caught in a storm on Lake Vierwaldstatter and saw the terrifying lightning flashes reflected on the surface of water that suddenly had turned black.

They were amazed at the truly Italian city of Lugano, a city of noisy, babbling crowds, macaroni, mandolins, bottles of Chianti, and iced orangeade.

The peaked towers of Chillon Castle seemed to rise straight up out of the

lake and were outlined against the jagged peak of Dent du Midi. There they .saw the famous dungeon and iron ring, the stone columns and an inscription, attributed to Byron, scratched out on one of them.

They bought Auntie a light silk blanket in one of the towns of German Switzerland. At one of the stations a group of lively, stocky Tyrol marksmen came into their carriage; they wore short trousers and wide green braces; tiny caps, adorned with pheasant feathers, were stuck on the muzzles of their guns, and they yodelled as they sang Tyrol melodies.

There were many other impressions, but they were all confused, leaving them with a feeling of a constant need to keep on travelling.

When the time arrived for them to go on to Paris, Vasily Petrovich hesitated. He was sitting in their small room in one of Geneva's cheap hotels and going over their resources, covering a scrap of notepaper with long columns of tiny figures.

"Well, when do we leave for Paris?" Petya asked impatiently.

"Never!" Father snapped.

"But you promised us."

"I know, but I'm calling it off."

"Why?"

"We haven't enough money left. How can we go to Paris when it's nearly August; Auntie says that the entrance exams at Faig's begin on the first; in any case, it's about time you and Pavlik stopped having a good time and got down to reviewing a few subjects before the new term begins. In other words, we've had enough!"

"Daddy, you're fooling!" Petya pleaded.

"You heard what I said!" Father muttered.

When Petya noticed that Father's voice had reverted to the usual tone, he changed his approach.

"But you promised, and it's not honourable to go back on your *word,"* he said casually and rather impudently.

"How dare you speak to your father like that! Be quiet! You insolent child!" Vasily Petrovich shouted and grabbed Petya by the shoulders, with a mind to give him a good shaking, but then he remembered that they were abroad, and let it go at one short yank, after which they all felt relieved: thank God, the matter had been settled at last, there would not be any more travelling. They would go back to dear old Odessa *via* Vienna.

They realized how incredibly tired they were, how bored by endless jolting in railway carriages, sleeping in hotels, buying postcards, running to art galleries, speaking French, and eating Swiss soup and tiny pieces of meat with vegetables instead of *borshch* and *vareniki.*

They wanted to swim in the sea, eat a good slice of sweet water-melon, drink steaming tea from the samovar, and have strawberry jam and hot buns with deliciously melting iced butter.

Terribly homesick, they left the very next day.

They were in such a rush that although they broke their journey in Vienna for two days, it made no impression on them whatever. They had had too much. The only recollection that remained was a scene they saw from the carriage window as they were pulling out of the station: a crimson strip of sunset and the endlessly drawn-out skyline of steeples and spires, weather-vanes and the

enormous Ferris wheel in Prater Amusement Park which towered over the city and seemed somehow to be a strange symbol of Vienna itself.

The train crawled slowly, and it took them nearly two days and two nights to reach the Russian border. All because Vasily Petrovich, true to his principle of economizing on tickets, had decided not to waste money on the express train — *SchneUzug* — and had booked tickets on the *Personenzug,* that is, the slow passenger train which, despite its very appropriate and pretty-sounding name, turned out to be a freight-and-passenger train.

THE HOME-COMING

Journeying across Switzerland, Petya and Pavlik had both become expert rail travellers and had learned to determine the exact speed of a train by the telegraph poles flashing past. For instance, if one could count slowly to five or six between poles, that meant the train was doing about thirty miles an hour. The Swiss trains were mostly fast trains—they counted to five between the poles. Sometimes there were trains that had only four or even three counts between poles. But on the Austrian *Personenzug* they counted up to ten between the poles—a tortoise speed. No longer did the poles flash by the windows in quick succession; each one sailed by slowly, lazily trailing thin wires with lonely swallows perched on them, and the wait for the next pole was so long that at times it seemed as if there would not be a next pole. The train stopped at every station and siding on the way. There were no sleeping-berths. They travelled day and night on the hard wooden benches of the closely packed third-class carriage.

Their fellow-passengers were not the well-dressed, polite, and good-natured tourists and farmers of the Swiss trains. These were Austria's poor: artisans with their tools, soldiers, market-women, Jews in old-fashioned coats and white stockings and with side whiskers so long and curled that they seemed to be faked.

There were a lot of Slavs in the carriage—Czechs, Poles, and Serbians; some were in national costume. They smoked foul-smelling cigars and porcelain pipes with long, hanging *chubouks* and green tassels. They ate dry Austrian sausage, filling the carriage with the odour of garlic; as Vasily Petrovich said, sniffing the air, it had a purely local flavour.

The passengers spoke a mixture of Slavic languages, and dialects, and German was hardly heard.

Most passengers had but short distances to travel. People kept coming in and going out at every station. An old organ-grinder boarded the train at one of the many stops. He had on a green hunting-jacket with buttons made of a deer's antlers and was not unlike the Emperor Franz Josef. Finding a seat in the corner of the carriage, he began grinding out his tunes. After he had played ten Viennese waltzes and marches, he took his battered Tyrol hat and passed it round, bowing with truly royal grace. However, the only one who gave him anything was a woman with tear-reddened eyes who took some coins from her purse, wrapped them in paper, and dropped them into his hat. At the nearest station he shouldered his little organ with shreds of glass bead ornaments hanging from it and got off the train.

For a long time after, the pitiful sounds of the old organ vibrated in Petya's ears. His mood blended strangely with the shabby and forlorn appearance of the

strangers who surrounded him, with the twilight, and the faint creaking of the carriage lantern; the Austrian conductor in a soft cap had just placed a lighted candle-end in it which cast a red glow on the sides of the carriage and the sealed red Westinghouse brake handle.

They approached the Russian border the next day, in a state of utter exhaustion. It was drizzling. As before people got off at every stop, but no new passengers boarded the train. When some people sitting next to them got out, Vasily Petrovich spread his raincoat on the empty seats and placed his travelling-bag at the head for a pillow, to make a place for Pavlik. But an Austrian soldier suddenly loomed up, shoved Pavlik aside, flopped down on the bench, put his head on the travelling-bag, and was sound asleep in an instant, filling the carriage with his snoring.

"How dare you!" Vasily Petrovich shouted in a high-pitched voice, livid with rage. "You boor!"

But the soldier lay there as if he were made of lead; he heard nothing and understood less. It suddenly dawned on Vasily Petrovich that the soldier was dead drunk. This was the last straw.

"You insolent curl Do you hear? Get up this minute! Get off our seats!"

The soldier opened his watery-blue eyes, winked, belched loudly, and fell asleep again.

Pavlik began pounding at the tops of the double-stitched, heavy military boots, shouting:

"Get out! Get out!"

The soldier raised himself up slowly and stared at Pavlik in amazement for a few moments, uncertain whether to laugh or get angry. He decided on the latter. Laying his heavy hand with dirty nails on Pavlik's face, his red moustache bristling, he spluttered and shouted in German:

"Get out, you Russian swine! You're not the boss here! This isn't Russia! I'll box your ears off for insulting the Austrian army!"

The conductor strolled in at the sound of the rumpus.

"Remove this drunken wretch!" Father demanded.

But the conductor sided with the soldier. He threw out his chest and informed Father sternly that there were no reserved seats in the carriage and each passenger was entitled to occupy any empty seat he wished; moreover, if the Russian gentleman persisted in insulting the Austrian army he would throw him and his children and their things off the train. Those were his exact words, *"Mit Kind and Kegel hinaus!"*

When Vasily Petrovich heard that he was being accused of insulting the Austrian army, he really got scared. "Calm down," he mumbled to Pavlik as he pulled his raincoat and travelling-bag from under the soldier.

The soldier's sword rattled as life turned over and began snoring and whistling once more.

He jumped up at the very next station and left the carriage, muttering Austrian oaths concerning the Russian swine.

The Bacheis remained sitting there, stung to the quick. Vasily Petrovich was pale and his beard shook. But there was nothing he could do.

When they eventually reached the border, there was only one other passenger left. He occupied the far corner, hugging a wicker basket and a holdall with a pillow and an old quilt in it.

He was apparently a Russian too, and his appearance classified him as an emigre.

He seemed very agitated, although he was trying to appear calm. In fact, he even pretended to be dozing. An Austrian official passed through the carriage soon afterwards and took their passports. Petya noticed that the passenger's hands trembled as he handed the officer his passport. With a screeching of brakes the train came to a stop. The Bacheis hauled their things on to the filthy, deserted platform and set out for the custom-house. There was a long screened counter made up o>f rails worn white; several Russian customs officials and a Russian gendarme captain in a light-blue tunic with silver braid were standing behind it.

They spread their baggage on the counter for inspection. For some reason, Vasily Petrovich always got excited and irritated whenever he had anything to do with officialdom, even when there was no apparent reason for it. He had the feeling that his dignity was being trampled upon.

"Do you have any coffee, tobacco, perfumes, or silks?" the customs official asked as he ran his hand indifferently over the things laid out on the counter.

"You can find out for yourself," Father said and flushed as he tried to control the trembling of his jaw. "I am not obliged to declare anything."

The customs official rummaged about in the travelling-bag disinterestedly, pulled a few stones out of Pavlik's bag, shrugged, looked them over, replaced them, and went off.

"Where have you come from?" the gendarme captain asked coldly, and his spurs jingled slightly.

"From Austro-Hungary, as you see."

"You've been to Switzerland, too, I gather?" the captain said politely, pointing his grey, suede-clad hand at their capes and alpenstocks.

"Obviously," Vasily Petrovich said with a hint of irony in his voice.

"Did you bring any literature with you?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean Geneva or Zurich Social-Democratic publications. It's my duty to warn you that any attempt to carry such anti-government illegal publications across the frontier can lead to the most dire consequences."

Vasily Petrovich had no time to open his mouth and tell the captain what he thought of him, for the latter suddenly turned his back on him and walked off quickly; in fact, he practically ran towards the passenger who had been in the carriage with them.

The man was standing at the railed counter, surrounded by customs officials who were emptying the contents of his wicker basket on to the counter. There were a pair of student's serge trousers, cotton shirts, a pair of boots, a quilt, and linen. They fingered his quilt methodically.

"Nikiforov!" the captain said loudly, and a little man in civilian dress with a large pair of shears suddenly appeared next to him. "Let's have the quilt!"

The little man went over to the counter and began ripping the seams expertly.

"You have no right to destroy my property," the passenger said and turned as white as a sheet.

"Don't worry, we won't spoil it," the officer replied.. He stuck his hand into an open seam and began pulling out packs of cigarette paper squeamishly with two fingers. The thin paper was closely covered with fine print. Two men in

bowler hats ran up and seized the man. He turned a deep red and suddenly tried to break free. As he looked about he shouted in a weak voice:

"Tell the comrades I was taken at the border. My name is Osipov! Tell them I was caught. I'm Osipov!"

He was hustled through a side door with the railroad's iron monogram on it.

"The other passengers are requested to return to the platform and continue their journey," the gendarme captain said and handed out the passports.

The Bacheis walked across the station to the opposite platform, where a Russian train with "Volochisk-Odessa" written on the carriage plates awaited them. A Russian station-master in a red cap went up to a brass bell and rang twice. Thus did Russia greet them.

PRECIOUS STONES

The next day they drove from the station with Auntie in two real Russian cabs, past Kulikovo Field and Athos Church, which to Petya now seemed very small and somehow provincial. Auntie seemed provincial too in a huge new cart-wheel hat and a hobble skirt so narrow that she could only toddle along with tiny steps.

Petya noticed that although Auntie was glad to see them, she made much less fuss than she usually did when they came back in the autumn from Budaki. It was almost as though she was displeased about something. With a sudden shock of surprise, Petya realized what the trouble was. In her heart of hearts Auntie was deeply hurt that they had not taken her abroad with them.

All her talk with Vasily Petrovich and the boys was tinged with a faint irony. She kept calling them "our famous travellers," and when Petya told her about the blizzard in the mountains, Auntie said loftily, "I can well imagine it."

The house where they lived seemed to have got smaller and their flat looked cramped and dark. The silken quilt they had brought from Switzerland as a present left Auntie completely unimpressed. And in general, at first there was a certain awkwardness, unease.

It soon vanished, however, and everything slipped back into old groove, that is except for Pavlik's disappearance on the second day and his reappearance late in the evening, hungry, worn out and tear-stained.

"Great heavens! What on earth's happened?" cried Auntie, throwing up her hands as she saw her darling in such a state. "Where have you been all this time?"

"Oh, let me alone," he said gloomily.

"Very well, but—"

"I was in town."

"What for?"

"Let me alone, can't you!"

"You're frightening me, Pavlik!"

"I went to sell those precious stones."

"What stones?" Auntie looked into Pavlik's face in alarm.

"Precious stones," he repeated, "the ones I brought from Switzerland. I wanted to sell them and buy a second-hand bicycle."

Auntie's chin trembled.

"Well? And what happened?"

"I went to Purits Brothers on Richelieu Street, and to Faberge's on Deribasovskaya Street, and then to two jeweller's shops on Preobrazhenskaya Street—and a lot more after that. And then I went to the archaeological museum

and the University and to the pawnbroker's. ..."

"Great heavens!" Auntie groaned, pressing the ends of her fingers against her temples.

"I thought perhaps they bought things like that too." Pavlik slumped wearily on to a chair and let his head rest on the table. "But they all said—"

"What did they all say?"

"They said my stones were just ordinary rocks."

"Oh, chickie dear, ray own little one!" Auntie gasped, between tears and laughter. "My poor little traveller, *my* little gold-digger! Oh, I can't stop. I'll die of laughing! You'll be the death of me yet!"

That was the end of the brief story of the Bachei family's travels.

Petya, however, was still bursting with impressions. Time after time he gave Auntie and Dunyasha the cook eloquent, detailed descriptions of Constantinople, the Mediterranean, a volcanic eruption, the disturbances in Naples, the Simplon tunnel, the blizzard in the mountains, the dungeons of the Chillon Castle and the dirigible "Villa Lucerne." He displayed all the picture postcards, souvenirs and free travel agency prospectuses he had stuffed into his suitcase. Every day he sauntered over Kulikovo Field and along all the streets round his house in the hope of meeting some boy he knew and telling him all about the trip abroad. But it was still a fortnight before the end of the holidays and the boys had not come back from the country or the seaside. The town was empty.

Petya was lonely and dull. He looked with distaste at the deep blue of the August sky arching over the gardens and roof-tops. He heard the monotonous, sleepy cries of hawkers coming from all sides, and felt ready to die of boredom.

"Your friend Gavrik's been several times," said Auntie one day, "he wanted to know when you'd be back from your travels."

"What!" cried Petya. "Gavrik!" He stopped, confused by the realization that he had never once even thought of Gavrik recently. Gavrik Chernoivanenko! How could he have forgotten him? Why, that was just the person Petya was wanting!

Although the day was hot, even sultry, Petya seized his Swiss cape and alpenstock and without losing a moment set off for Near Mills.

SUNDAY

Now that Petya had an aim, the town no longer seemed so empty and dull. It was Sunday, and the bells rang melodiously. The little engine on a suburban train gave a merry toot as it puffed past Kulikovo Field toward Bolshoi Fontan, pulling its string of open coaches filled with passengers in Sunday clothes, the officers looking particularly festive in their starched white tunics sparkling with gold buttons and crossed by narrow straps on which their swords hung. Cooks were coming home with market baskets on their arms, their usual load of provisions topped off with bunches of dark-red dahlias and orange amaranthuses that looked like vegetables. Handcarts filled with water-melons, plums and early grapes rattled along the road. All this gave Petya a holiday feeling, a special lift of the spirits, and he gaily struck the metal end of his alpenstock against the stone slabs of the pavement and the metal horse-blocks.

He walked so fast that he got over the quite considerable distance to Near Mills in half an hour. He was bathed in perspiration and slowed down only when he came to the familiar fence made of old sleepers. Here Petya stopped to get his breath, then began to put on the cape which up to now he had carried on his arm. But he hardly had draped it around him and assumed a solemn look, when somebody cried quite close, "Oh, who's that?"

Petya turned and saw a pretty girl in her teens wearing a cotton dress; she was looking at him over the fence in something like awe. .

Motya had grown so much taller and so much prettier in the summer months that at first he did not know her again. And before he realized who she was she recognized him, flushed crimson and backed towards the house with small steps, never taking her frightened, admiring eyes off the boy.

Finally she bumped into the mulberry tree beneath which hens were pecking at the reddish-black berries, staining the smooth clay of the courtyard with the juice. Then she called in a faint voice, "Gavrik, Petya's come."

"Aha, back again," Gavrik said, appearing at the door of the hut. He was barefoot and his unbelted Russian shirt was open at the throat. With one hand he held up his trousers, in the other was a Latin textbook.

"You've been a long time on your travels! I'm going through the Latin grammar a second time by myself— darn the thing! Well, give me your paw and let's take a look at you."

Petya grasped Gavrik's strong hand, already the hand of a man, and then Motya's small one—soft, but rough on the palm.

"Thanks very much about the letter," said Gavrik when they were sitting on the bench by the table fixed in the ground under the mulberry tree.

"I sent it from Naples," Petya said and added carelessly, "express."

"I know," said Gavrik seriously.

"How d'you know?"

"We've had an answer. Thanks again, very much. You're a pal. You helped *us a* lot."

Petya felt much flattered, although he was secretly a bit put out to find that Gavrik was paying no attention to his cape and alpenstock. Motya, however, never took her eyes off these strange things, and at last asked timidly, "Petya, does everyone go about like that over there?"

"Not everyone, of course, only some people," Petya explained with a condescending smile. "Mostly those who go mountain-climbing. Because up on top you may get caught in a blizzard. And without an alpenstock you can't climb up at all, it's dreadfully slippery."

"And did you climb up?"

"No end of times," Petya sighed.

"Oh, how lucky you are!" said Motya, gazing reverently at the cape and the iron-shod stick.

Gavrik, however, could not hold back a comment of a different kind.

"Better take that thing off, Petya, look at the way you're sweating."

Petya treated this with silent contempt.

Then he began eagerly telling them everything about the trip, sparing no colours and careful to remember the smallest detail. Gavrik listened rather indifferently, but Motya, sitting by Petya on the corner of the bench, whispered from time to time, "How lucky you are!"

It would be wrong, however, to say that Gavrik was not at all interested in what Petya had to tell. But the things that interested him were not those that interested Motya. For instance, he listened with indifference to Petya's description of the volcanic eruption and the blizzard in the mountains. But when it came to the tram workers' strike in Naples, and the meeting with Maxim Gorky, and the emigres, then Gavrik's eyes sparkled, knots of muscle appeared at the sides of his jaw, and bringing his fist down on Petya's knee he cried, "Aha! That was grand! That was well done!"

But when Petya, in a half-whisper, afraid that Gavrik might not believe him, said that he thought he had seen Rodion Zhukov in Naples, Gavrik not only believed it, he even nodded and said, "That's right. It was him. We know about it. You probably saw him when he left the Capri school for Longjumeau, to go to Ulyanov-Lenin."

Petya stared at his friend in surprise. How he had changed! It was not only that he was taller and more mature, there was a concentrated determination about him, an assurance and even—this struck Petya most of all—a certain confidence and ease. Look how freely and easily he pronounced the French word Longjumeau, and how ordinary and natural the name Ulyanov-Lenin sounded when he spoke it.

"Oh, so you know Longjumeau too?" said Petya ingenuously.

"Of course," Gavrik answered, smiling with eyes alone.

"They've got a ... Party school there," Petya went on, not quite sure of himself and hesitating before the words "Party school."

Gavrik regarded Petya thoughtfully as though weighing him up, then laughed gaily.

"Seems like you didn't waste your time abroad, brother! You've started to understand a few things. Good!"

Petya dropped his eyes modestly, then suddenly jumped as though stung. He had just remembered the incident at the frontier and felt instinctively that it had something to do with Gavrik's last words or, to be more exact, with the thought behind them.

"Gavrik, listen," he began excitedly, then glanced at Motya and stopped uncertainly.

"Motya, you go off and take a walk somewhere," said Gavrik firmly, patting her on the shoulder over which her fair braid with its bow of cotton was prettily, flung.

The girl pouted, but rose obediently and went away at once, from which Petya concluded that this was nothing uncommon in the Chernoivanenko family.

"Well, what is it?" Gavrik asked.

"Osipov wanted his comrades told that he'd .been caught at the frontier," said Petya, lowering his voice; he then told Gavrik all that had happened in the customhouse at Volochisk the day they had crossed.

Gavrik listened in silence, with a serious face, then said, "Just a minute."

He went into the cottage and came out again in a moment, followed by Terenty.

"Ah, here's our foreign traveller," said Terenty, holding out his hand. "Welcome home! And thank you very much about the letter. You helped us a lot, got us out of a hole."

Petya noticed that Terenty too seemed somehow to have changed during the summer. Although his broad, pock-marked workman's face was as rough-hewn and frank as before, Petya read a greater firmness and independence in its features. Like Gavrik he was comfortably barefoot, but his trousers were new and of good quality, a jacket was thrown over his shoulders and his clean shirt had a metal stud in a buttonhole at the top, from which it could be concluded that Terenty wore stiff collars.

He sat down where Motya had sat, beside Petya, flung his strong, heavy arm round the boy's shoulders, and gave him a hug.

"Well? Let's have it."

Petya repeated the story in great detail.

"A bad business," said Terenty, scratching one bare foot with the other. "That's the second mail-bag gone wrong. Those students are no good at all. I said we ought to arrange it through—" Terenty and Gavrik exchanged meaning looks. "Well, and of course," Terenty turned back to Petya, "you know all this doesn't concern anyone else."

"He understands a bit already," said Gavrik.

"So much the better," Terenty said casually and then changed the subject quite definitely. "You won't be going abroad again? Well, all right. It's not so bad at home, either. And about the letter, thanks again. You did a big thing for us. Stay here a while, take a walk, maybe, and I'll go back inside, I've got visitors. I'll be seeing you. Look, the best thing you can do is to go on the common, Zhenya's there, he's got a new kite. I bought it at Kolpakchi's. It's the latest construction, and will fly in any wind."

He was clearly anxious to get back to his guests.

"Motya, why've you gone off and left Petya?" he called. "Come and take him

to the common. I've got to go, excuse me."

Terenty walked quickly back into the cottage; through the small windows Petya could see it was full of people. He had a feeling Terenty wanted to get rid of him, but before he had time to formulate a feeling of offence Motya appeared, Gavrik took him by the arm and all three went off to the common. Eight-year-old Zhenya, Motya's brother, was very much like Gavrik at the same age, only plumper and better dressed. Surrounded by all the boys of Near Mills, he was trying to fly a strange kind of kite, not a bit like the ones which Petya's generation had made out of reeds, newspaper, glue, thread and coarse grass for a tail.

THE KITE FROM A SHOP

It was a shop kite that looked like a geometrical drawing, with canary-yellow calico stretched over it and tight connecting wires that made it look like the Wright brothers' biplane. Two boys stood on tiptoe zealously holding the apparatus as high as they could reach, while Zhenya, holding the thin cord, waited for the best moment to race across the common, pulling his flying machine after him. At last he screwed up his eyes and ran into the wind, butting it with his head. The kite shot up, swayed uncertainly, circled and fell back on the grass.

"The brute just won't fly," Zhenya hissed through his teeth, wiping his wet, angry, freckled face with the tail of his shirt. Evidently, this was not the first time the kite had flopped.

All the boys of Near Mills rushed to the kite, whooping and chattering, but Zhenya pushed them angrily aside. "Keep your hands off," he said and started untangling the cord.

"Zhora, Kolya, go back and hold it up again. As high as you can, but don't let it go till I shout. See?"

He seemed used to giving orders, and the others to obeying them, although he was the youngest there. The real Chernoivanenko breed, thought Gavrik with a sense of pride, as he watched Zhora and Kolya take their places again and hold up the kite while Zhenya spat on his index finger and raised it to gauge the wind.

"This time you're going to fly, see if you don't," he muttered like an invocation, and took a firm grip of the cord. "Are you ready there?" he called. "One, two, three— let go!"

The kite shot up—and fell. Mocking laughter came from the boys.

"It won't fly, no good trying," someone shouted.

"Bone-head!" Zhenya replied. "D'you know what kind of kite this is? Dad bought it at Kolpakchi's on Yekaterininskaya Street; it cost one ruble forty-five kopeks."

"A lot your Dad knows about kites!"

"You leave my Dad alone, or I'll give you a sock in the jaw!"

"It won't fly anyway, it's got no tail."

"You fool, it's not an ordinary kite, it's from a shop, I'll show you whether it'll fly or not."

But try as he would, the shop kite flopped back on the ground every time.

"Your Dad just threw away his money."

It was a painful situation. The disappointed spectators began drifting away.

"Wait a bit, where are you going, stupids?" cried Zhenya, trying to smile as he squatted on his heels by the kite. "Come back here, it'll fly all right this time."

But his authority was now completely gone and like a defeated general, he could get none to heed him. At first Petya and Gavrik exchanged glances and contemptuous observations about the shop toy which couldn't come anywhere near the good old home-made kites. But after a while Gavrik began to feel the family honour was in danger.

He frowned and paced weightily over to the kite. "Keep off, it's not yours," whined Zhenya, almost in tears, trying to push his uncle away with his elbow.

"Is that so?" remarked Gavrik; raising Zhenya by the shoulders, he gave him a shove with his knee on the seat. Then he walked unhurriedly all round the kite without touching it, carefully examining all its struts and fastenings.

"So that's it. Now I see," he said at last and bent a stern look on Zhenya. "Can't you see where the centre of gravity is, dunderhead?"

"Where?" asked Zhenya.

"Utochkin the flyer," Gavrik scoffed, without condescending to explain.

Once more he bent a keen-eyed gaze on the kite, stooped over it, refastened a string and moved an aluminium ring a little.

"Now it's a different matter. Come on, let's show 'em." And he winked at Petya.

Petya and Motya took the ends of the kite and held it over their heads. Gavrik picked up the ball of string lying on the ground among the withered immortelles, shouted, "Let go!" and ran against the wind.

The kite slipped out of Petya's and Motya's hands and shot upward—but this time it did not falter and fall, it hung lightly in the air and followed the running Gavrik in a graceful curve. Petya and Motya stood there with hands still raised, as though reaching out to the kite, begging it to return. But it flew on, drawn by the cord, mounting smoothly higher.

Gavrik stopped and the kite stopped too, almost directly over his head.

"Aha! That's taught you!" he called up, wagging a finger at the kite. He began carefully twitching the taut line and the kite twitched too, like a fish on a hook. Then he moved the ball forward and back, carefully unwinding the line which slid off- arid up in little jerks. The kite obediently rose higher and higher, catching the wind and repeating the movements of the ball in Gavrik's hands, but with a smoother, wider sweep. It was so high now that they had to throw their heads far back to see it.

The kite became smaller, it floated against the deep-blue August sky, slender and golden, bathed in the warm sunshine, every surface catching the fresh sea breeze.

Zhenya ran along beside his Uncle Gavrik, begging and pleading to be allowed to hold the line, but it was no good.

"Keep off, kid," said Gavrik, watching the kite through narrowed eyes. It was only when the whole line had been paid out and Gavrik had given a final twitch to the kite as though making sure it was firmly fastened, that he handed it over to Zhenya.

"Hold it tight, if you let that go you'll not catch it again."

Motya ran home for paper and they began "sending up letters." There was something magical in the way a fragment of paper with a hole in the middle threaded on to the stick began hesitantly rising up the line, sometimes stopping as though it had caught on something. The nearer the "letter" came to the kite, the faster it climbed until at last it slipped quickly up and clung to the kite like

steel to a magnet, while a second and a third followed it up, and Petya imagined that letters from him full of love and complaint were sliding up one after the other into the blue emptiness, to ... Longjumeau.

Suddenly the line slipped out of Zhenya's hands. The kite, liberated, flew up with the wind, carrying a long garland of "letters." They all had to run for a long time, jumping ditches and climbing fences, before they found it at last outside the town, in the steppe, lying in thick silver wormwood.

When they at last came home to Near Mills, it was evening, the big moon still shed little light but faint ashy shadows were cast by fences and trees, the air was perfumed with four-o'clocks, and grey moths circled and fluttered mysteriously in the darkness of the hedges.

As they neared the house, Petya saw a number of people coming out of the gate. One of them he recognized as Uncle Fedya, the sailor from the tailor shop at Sabarisky Barracks who had made him the navy blouse. But the sailor seemed not to recognize him in the dim light.

Petya also noticed a young woman in a hat and a blouse, and an elderly man in a jacket and top-boots carrying a railwayman's lantern, evidently a guard or engine-driver. Fragments of talk came to him.

"Levitsky writes in *Our Dawn* that the failure of the 1905 Revolution was partly due to the fact that no bourgeois government was formed," the young woman's voice said.

"Your Levitsky's just a Liberal and nothing more, he only makes a show of being a Marxist," a man's voice replied. "You read the *Star,* there's an article by Lenin, that'll help you to get things straight."

"I propose we keep off discussion out of doors. You can start quarrelling again next Sunday," said a third voice.

There was smothered laughter and the figures disappeared in the shadows.

"Who are those visitors?" Petya asked and felt at once that he should not have asked.

"Oh, just people," said Gavrik reluctantly. "It's a sort of Sunday school." To change the subject he went on, "On the fourteenth of August I want to take the exams for three forms. I've been through everything. If you'll just help me with the Latin a bit." "Of course I will," said Petya. The Chernoivanenko family would not hear of letting Petya go before supper. Terenty placed a candle with a glass shade on the table under the mulberry tree, at once attracting a whole swarm of moths. His wife, washing the teacups after the visitors, wiped her hands on her apron and went up to Petya. Of all the Chernoivanenko family she had changed the least. She greeted the boy country-fashion, holding out her hand with stiff fingers.

Motya brought a big dish covered with a homespun cloth out of the larder.

"Maybe you'd like to try our plum dumplings, Petya?" she asked shyly.

After supper Petya set off home. Gavrik walked with him almost to the station. It was a warm summer night, a harvest moon in a misty ring shone through the dark branches, crickets were shrilling everywhere, on the outskirts dogs barked as they do in villages, and somewhere a gramophone was playing. Petya felt a pleasant weariness after this long delightful day which had imperceptibly opened before him something new, something he had previously sensed only vaguely.

On that day Petya matured inwardly, as though he had grown older by

several years. Perhaps it was on that day the boy finally became a youth.

Now he no longer had any doubts that it was to a certain extent from Near Mills, from Terenty's cottage, that this thing called the "revolutionary movement" came.

THE BAD MARK

The new term opened on the fifteenth of August and some days before that, Vasily Petrovich went to Faig's school to conduct re-examinations of pupils who had failed in the end-of-term exams. He came home to dinner in a radiant mood, for Mr. Faig had been more than affable to him, and had personally taken him all over the school, showing him the gym and the physics laboratory fitted up with all the best, modern equipment imported from abroad. Finally Mr. Faig had taken him home in his own carriage, so that the whole street had seen Vasily Petrovich in his frock-coat, with exercise books under his arm, jump rather awkwardly out of the carriage and bow to Mr. Faig who vouchsafed a glimpse of his dyed side-whiskers and a wave of a hand in Swiss glove in the window.

At dinner Vasily Petrovich was in high spirits and re-dated a number of humorous incidents illustrating the ' ways and customs of the Faig school where certain pupils, the spoiled sons of rich parents, stayed two or even three years in each form, grew whiskers, married and started families while still within the walls of that god-forsaken establishment; why, there had even been a case when a Faig pupil came to school with his own son, the only difference being that father was in the sixth form, and son in the first.

"Se non e vero e ben trovafo!" cried Vasily Petrovich laughing infectiously—it's not true, but it's well invented.

Auntie, however, did not appear to share his mood. She kept shaking her head doubtfully and saying, "Well, well, I somehow can't see you stopping there long."

In the evening Vasily Petrovich sat down to correct the exercise books. The boys heard him snort a number of times, and once he muttered, "What the devil is all this? Disgraceful! It's got to be put a stop to, and at once," and threw down his pencil.

Out of the ten boys taking their Russian exam a second time, Vasily Petrovich failed seven, and although at the teachers' meeting Mr. Faig made no objections, his expression was one of grieved indignation. This time Vasily Petrovich came home by horse-tram, and not in high spirits.

At the end of the first term the teaching staff learned that a certain Blizhensky was to enter the school. This Blizhensky was the son of a broadcloth millionaire, a young man who had been to a number of high schools in St. Petersburg, then to others in Moscow and Kharkov, and finally to the Pavel Galagan College in Kiev, known as a school that accepted the worst pupils in the Russian Empire, even those who had been expelled in disgrace.

However, strange as it might be, the Pavel Galagan College too had got rid of

this prodigy. So now he was to enter the fifth form at Faig's. Although entrance examinations in the middle of the year were strictly prohibited, an exception was made in some roundabout way for the millionaire Blizhensky's son.

A few days before this examination Mr. Faig, meeting Vasily Petrovich in the assembly hall before morning prayers, took his arm and walked up and down the corridor with him, confiding some of his ideas with regard to the latest West-European pedagogical trends.

"I have a great respect for your strictness," he concluded. "In fact, I really admire it. I am strict myself— but I am also fair. And I stand by my principles. You failed seven boys not long ago, and did I ever say a word against it? But, my dear Vasily Petrovich, let us be frank—" He took a very thin gold watch from his waistcoat pocket and glanced at it. "There are times when pedagogical strictness can bring results which are just the opposite of those desired. Rejected by an establishment of learning, standing outside its walls, a young man, instead of becoming an educated, useful member of our young constitutional society, may enter the service of the police, may perhaps—*entre nous soit dit*— become an agent of the secret police, a spy, and in the end fall under the influence of the Black Hundred. I believe that to you, a Tolstoian and ... h'm ... perhaps a revolutionary, this would be very undesirable."

"I am not a Tolstoian, still less a revolutionary," said Vasily Petrovich with a touch of irritation.

"I say it only between ourselves. You may depend on my discretion. But everybody in this town knows that you have had differences with the authorities and have perhaps to a certain extent suffered for it. You are a Red, Vasily Petrovich. I will say no more. Not a word! But I would be extremely disappointed, nay! grieved, if this young man were to fail in his entrance examination. He is the only heir to a million, and ... he has already suffered much. In a word, I beg of you," Mr. Faig concluded in his softest, gentlest voice, "do not cause me any more unpleasantness. Be strict but merciful. This, in the interests of our educational establishment which I hope are as dear to you as to me. I think you understand me."

On this day Vasily Petrovich again rolled home in Mr. Faig's carriage. For some days he felt as though he had eaten tainted fish.

"To hell with it!" he decided at last. "I'll give the young swine a bare pass. You can't knock down a wall with a pea-shooter."

When the exam was actually held, however, a few days later, and Vasily Petrovich saw the "young swine" sitting alone in his glory at a table in the middle of the assembly hall, before the entire Areopagus of teachers— for he was to be examined in all subjects simultaneously and briefly—the blood rushed to his head.

The young man, about twenty years of age, was in the full-dress uniform of the Pavel Galagan College, and the high, stiff collar constricted his throat and pushed against his powdered cheeks, making him look as though he were choking. The back of his clipped neck displayed a liberal amount of pimples, and his reddish-chestnut hair parted in the middle was so plastered with brilliantine that his flat, snaky head shone like a mirror. Now, Vasily Petrovich could not stand men who used lotions, and the smell of brilliantine made him feel sick. But most of all his sense of what was proper was outraged by the gold pince-nez which perched most incongruously on the young man's coarse nose,

giving his little pig's eyes a frankly impudent expression.

What a blockhead, thought Vasily Petrovich, irritated, tossing his head and fastening all the buttons of his frock-coat.

As he stood to attention to answer the examiners' questions, the young man thrust out his broad rear, which seemed to be poured into his uniform.

When Vasily Petrovich's turn came, he put a number of simple questions in an indifferent voice, received answers that brought a melancholy smile from Mr. Faig, drew the report form towards him with trembling fingers and put down a fail. The exam ended in funereal silence. Vasily Petrovich went home on the horse-tram, took off his collar that seemed to have become too tight, removed his frock-coat and boots, refused any dinner and lay down on his bed, face to the wall. Neither Auntie nor the boys ventured to ask him anything, but all understood something very serious must have happened.

In the evening the bell rang, and when Petya opened the door he saw an old man in a long beaver coat and a young man with gold pince-nez wearing the smart uniform cap of the Ravel Galagan College.

"Is Vasily Petrovich at home?" the old man asked, and without waiting for an answer marched straight towards the dining-room in his coat and hat, pointing towards the half-open door with his ivory-headed stick and asking, "In there, eh?"

Vasily Petrovich barely had time to get into his frock-coat and boots.

"I'm Blizhensky. Good evening," the old man wheezed. "You failed this idiot of mine today, and you were quite right. In your place I'd have bashed his face in as well. Come here, you worthless lout." And he turned round.

The young man emerged from behind his father, took off his cap and held it in both hands, his glistening head hanging.

"Down on your knees!" his father rasped, striking his stick on the floor. "Kiss Vasily Petrovich's hand!"

The young man did not kneel, nor did he kiss Vasily Petrovich's hand, he gulped and then began to cry noisily, rubbing a red nose with his handkerchief.

"He's sorry, he'll not do it again," the old man said. "Now you will give him private lessons at home twice a week, and pull him up. As for the entrance examination, we can settle it like this." The old man felt in the pocket of his frock-coat, on the lapel of which Vasily Petrovich saw the silver medal of the Society of Michael the Archangel *(A reactionary Black-Hundred organization.—Tr.)* on its tricolour ribbon, took out a blank exam report form and handed it to Vasily Petrovich. "Here you will put down a pass for the young fool, and the old report with God's help we will destroy. Faig and the other teachers have agreed."

He then took out a note-case and laid two "Peters" on the table—two five-hundred-ruble notes with a Peter I watermark.

"What is it?" mumbled Vasily Petrovich confusedly, with a weak gesture, glancing at the money through his pince-nez. Then he realized the outrageous insult of the proposal. He paled until even his ears were white, he shook from head to foot so that Petya feared he would die of heart failure now, this very instant. Then the colour flooded back to his face until it was purple and he gasped dumbly.

"Sir, you are a scoundrel!" he screamed. He sobbed with rage. "Get out of here! How dare you?... In my own house!... Get out! Get out this minute!"

The old man, startled and frightened, crossed himself rapidly several times

and then ran at top speed from the room, through the hall and out of the door, overturning the rickety what-not with its piles of music. And Vasily Petrovich ran after him, awkwardly pushing at his back, trying to strike him on the back of the head, while Petya pulled his father's coat, crying, "Daddy, please! Daddy, don't!"

Altogether, it was a disgraceful scene which ended with the old man and the young one pelting down the stairs, while Vasily Petrovich on the landing flung after them the five-hundred-ruble notes which fluttered slowly from wall to wall of the stair-well.

The two Blizhenskys, father and son, picked up the money, then looked up, and the old man yelled senselessly, "Mangy Jews!" and threatened with his ivory-topped stick.

The next day a messenger brought Vasily Petrovich a letter from Mr. Faig in a long, elegant envelope of thick paper with a fantastic coat-of-arms embossed on it. In most courteous terms Vasily Petrovich was informed that in consideration of differences of views on questions of education, his further services at the school had become superfluous. The letter was written for some reason in French and ended with the signature: *Baron Faig.*

Although this was a terrible blow for the Bachei family, Vasily Petrovich accepted it with perfect calm. He could have expected nothing else.

"Well, Tatyana Ivanovna," he said to Auntie, cracking his fingers, "it appears that my pedagogical activities ..." he smiled ironically, "it appears that my pedagogical activities are ended and I shall have to seek some other profession."

"But why?" Auntie asked. "You could give private lessons."

"To swine like that?" cried Vasily Petrovich, his voice rising almost to a scream. "Never! I'll carry sacks at the port first!"

Despite the seriousness of the situation, Auntie could not restrain a faint, melancholy smile. Vasily Petrovich jumped up as though stung and began pacing the room.

"Yes, sacks!" he said excitedly. "And I see nothing shameful or amusing in it. The overwhelming majority of the population in the Russian Empire are engaged in manual labour. Why should I be any exception?"

"But you are a man of learning."

"Of learning?" said Vasily Petrovich bitterly. "Yes, I don't dispute it. But I'm not a man, I'm a slave!"

"What did you say?" cried Auntie, raising her hands.

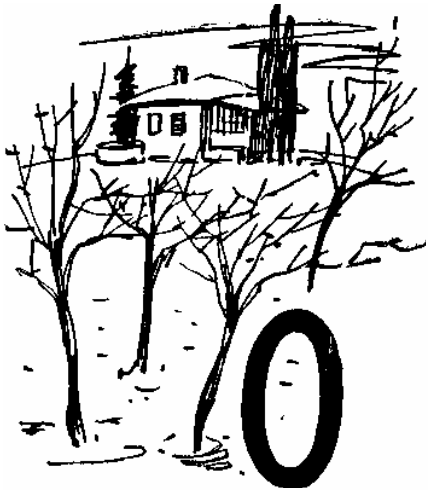
"You heard me. A slave. That's the only word for it. First, I was a slave of the Ministry of Education as represented by the head of the Education Department, and he drove me out like a dog because I presumed to have my own opinion about Tolstoi. Then, I became the slave of Faig, a slimy scoundrel, and he drove me out like a dog, too, because I was honest and refused to give a pass to that dolt, that blockhead Blizhensky, for the sole reason that he was the son of a millionaire, if you please. To hell with both of them and the whole Russian government into the bargain!" he shouted; it burst out of him, and for a second he himself was frightened at what he had said. But he could no longer stop. "And if in this Russia of ours I have to be somebody's slave," he went on, "then I'd sooner be an ordinary slave and not an intellectual one. At least I'll keep my inner integrity.... Oh God," he groaned with sudden tears in his eyes and looked at the icon. "What a blessing that He in His mercy took my poor Zhenya, that she

does not have to share these indignities with me! How would she have borne it, seeing nothing left to her husband but to carry sacks down at the port."

"How you keep harping on those sacks," said Auntie, wiping her eyes.

"Yes, sacks, sacks!" Vasily Petrovich repeated defiantly.

Night had fallen. Pavlik was asleep, breathing heavily, but Petya lay awake, listening to the voices in the dining-room. He had a vivid mental picture of his father, for some reason without overcoat and hat, in his frock-coat and old boots, going down the famous Odessa steps to the port and then dragging about the heavy jute sacks of copra. But there was something false, artificial about the picture. Petya himself could not take it seriously, yet nevertheless he was so sorry for his father that he wanted to weep, to run to him, embrace him and cry, "Never mind, Daddy, it'll be all right, I'll carry sacks with you too, we'll manage somehow!"



AUNTIE'S NEW IDEA

Of course, Vasily Petrovich did not carry sacks, and although the situation continued to be dreadful, even tragic, time went on and there was no outward change to be seen in the life of the Bachei family, except that Vasily Petrovich spent most of his time at home, trying not to go out anywhere.

The approach of poverty was so unnoticeable that a kind of tranquillity settled on them all. As for the outside world—friends and neighbours—the Faig episode passed unremarked, or rather, it was tacitly agreed that if Vasily Petrovich had quarrelled with two school principals in the course of one year, he must be impossible to get on with and he had nobody to blame but himself.

A factor which helped to distract attention from Vasily Petrovich's affairs was the murder of Stolypin in Kiev, an event which shook up the whole Russian Empire. Some were horrified, others felt the rise of vague, undefined hopes. For a month people talked of nothing but the "Bagrov shot," and were quite sure it smelt of revolution, although all knew that Stolypin had been shot by one of his own body-guards and the incident probably had nothing to do with revolution at all.

"Say what you like, Vasily Petrovich, but something's got to be done," said Auntie very decidedly one day. "We can't go on like this."

"What do you suggest?" Vasily Petrovich asked wearily.

"I've thought of a plan, but I don't know how you will regard it. Not far from Kovalevsky's country-house there's a really beautiful little place," said Auntie insinuatingly.

"Never in this world!" cried Vasily Petrovich resolutely.

"Wait a minute," Auntie said gently. "You don't even let me finish."

"Never in this world!" he cut in with still greater resolution.

"But look—"

"Oh, heavens," snapped Vasily Petrovich, frowning. "I know everything you're going to say."

"Now that's just where you're wrong."

"I'm not. But it's all nonsense. And you're only building castles in the air. I don't want to hear another word about it. To start off with, where's the money to come from?"

"We'd hardly need any. Perhaps just a very little."

"Never!" Vasily Petrovich cut her short.

"Now, why not?"

"Because I am against the whole principle of private property in land. You'll

never make me become a real estate owner. The land belongs to God. Yes, to God and the people who till it. I will not do it, and that's all I have to say. Besides, it's only empty dreams."

Auntie waited patiently for Vasily Petrovich to finish.

"I've listened to you," she said gently, "and now you listen to me. After all, it isn't even polite to interrupt in the middle of a sentence."

"Be so kind as to say all you want to say; but I do not wish to own any real estate whatsoever and I won't. And that's the end of it."

"In the first place, you don't have to own property. Madame Vasyutinskaya is prepared to rent the place. And secondly, we need pay her at first only about as much as we're paying for this flat; the rest of the money will come from the sale of the crop."

Hearing Auntie talk of sales of crops, Vasily Petrovich boiled up again.

"So that's it! And may I be permitted to inquire where this sale will take place and what this crop is to be?"

"Black and white cherries, pears, apples and grapes," said Auntie.

"So you suggest that I start trading in fruit?"

"But why not?"

"Well, of all things...." Unable to find words, Vasily Petrovich shrugged his shoulders.

Auntie ignored his impatient gesture. "We could do very well, and get out of all our difficulties at once."

"If that's the case, then why doesn't your Madame Vasyutinskaya want to reap all these benefits for herself?"

"Because she's an old lady and all alone, and she intends to go abroad."

Vasily Petrovich snorted.

"So your lonely old do-nothing wants to go abroad and shift all her worries on to our shoulders, is that it?"

"All right, have it your own way," said Auntie shortly, leaving the final question unanswered. "I thought you'd be attracted by my- idea of renting a delightful cottage close to town, close to the sea, tilling the soil, eating the produce of your own labour and at least being independent. It's completely according to your principles. But if you don't like the idea...."

"I don't!" said Vasily Petrovich stubbornly, and Auntie dropped the subject.

She understood her brother-in-law well enough to know that she had said enough for the present. Let him calm down and think it over, get used to the idea.

A few days later he opened the subject himself.

"You do get fantastic ideas," he- said. "I've noticed you've always got something foolish in your head-letting rooms, or cooking dinners—things of that sort. And nothing ever comes of it all."

"Something will come of this," said Auntie calmly.

"Just another of your castles in the air."

Auntie made no reply.

A few more days passed.

"It's absurd to think that we'd even have the physical strength to run a place like that."

"The house is quite a small one," Auntie said, "and there are only thirteen acres of land attached to it." With a faint smile she added, "In any case, I don't

think it would be any harder than carrying sacks down at the docks."

"That is not funny at all," said Vasily Petrovich flushing.

Again the subject was dropped, but now Auntie knew that Vasily Petrovich would soon give way. And she was right.

Gradually, imperceptibly, Auntie's idea was capturing his imagination. It was not such a foolish one after all; in fact, it contained a good deal of common sense, and Vasily Petrovich was secretly much taken with it, it fell into line with the views of life which had recently been taking form in his mind, especially since his visit to Switzerland. These views were still vague and undefined, a mixture of Jean Jacques Rousseau and the Narodniks, of "going to the people" and of natural education. He pictured a clean, uncomplicated, patriarchal country life, independent of the state. A flourishing little patch of soil cultivated by his own hands and those of his family, without the use of hired labour. Something in the spirit of Switzerland, of the cantons.

Now it appeared that his dream was close to realization. Everything was there—the small patch of land, the orchard, even the vineyard which made it particularly like southern Switzerland. True, there were no mountains, but there was the sea with bathing and fishing. And most important of all—freedom, independence from the state. What a wonderful upbringing for the children!

The end of it was that Vasily Petrovich finally took fire and asked Auntie to tell him all the details. From her room she brought a plan of the place. It appeared she had already gone quite a long way in her negotiations with Madame Vasyutinskaya. The house itself was a five-room affair with an outside kitchen, then there was a stable, a labourer's hut, a rain-water cistern and a shed which, Auntie said, held the wine press.

"Why, it's not just a summer cottage, it's a whole manor house!" Vasily Petrovich cried gaily.

Then they set to work counting the fruit trees and the vines, which were indicated by circles. Their calculations showed that within a year they would pay the whole rent and have a solid sum left over. But perhaps all this was only on paper? Auntie suggested going to see for themselves.

They boarded the little suburban train that passed their house and went to the sixteenth station, from which a horse-tram took them to the Kovalevsky country-house. After that, guided by Auntie, they walked a mile or so across the steppe to "their cottage."

Auntie was evidently familiar with the place. She stroked the dog as it rattled its chain, and tapped at the watchman's window. A sleepy-looking boy came out, whom Auntie called Gavrila. He was the last of Madame Vasyutinskaya's labourers and acted as watchman, stableman and vineyard tender. Now he showed the Bacheis over the house and grounds.

They saw the vineyard, the orchard, and even more trees than they had expected, for about three acres of recently planted cherry trees had not been included in the plan.

Everything was in excellent condition: the vines were bent over and covered with soil for the winter, and the trunks of the apple trees were swathed in straw to protect them from rabbits and field mice.

It had been a mild winter with little snow. Some still lay on the mounds of earth over the vines but it had already thawed on the sunny side. Near the house, however, where some very thick dark-green fir trees stood, great snow-drifts still

lay on the flower-beds, gilded by the setting sun, with the clearly etched dark-blue shadows of garden seats and of shrubs lying in long, wavy lines across them. The windows shone like gold tinsel. It was exactly like those winter landscapes which Petya saw every year at the spring exhibitions held by South Russian artists, where Auntie took the boys to teach them the love of beauty.

With a great rattling Gavrila opened the glass door of the house, and they went through the empty, cold rooms lighted by slanting rays of frosty sunshine.

All round about lay the dead, snow-covered steppe, criss-crossed by rabbit tracks and with nothing but Kovalevsky's house roof and a distant stretch of sea to catch the eye.

They went through the house and other buildings, then back to the orchard. Vasily Petrovich noticed that one carelessly wrapped apple tree had been gnawed. He stopped and turned a stern look on Gavrila.

"Look at that, that won't do," he said. "We'll have the rabbits eating our whole crop!"

THE OLD WOMAN

The next day final negotiations began with Madame Vasyutinskayia—and so did the search for money to pay the initial instalment of rent, the inevitable expenses attached to removal and starting in a new place.

For the first time Petya discovered that money was not only earned, it could also be "found." But to find money appeared to be something extremely complicated, worrying and, worst of all, humiliating. His father was often out, but now nobody said Vasily Petrovich was at school, or had gone to a teachers' meeting, they simply said he had "gone to town."

Father and Auntie used new words, words which Petya had never heard before, such as mutual credit association, short-term loan, pawnbroker, note of hand, six per cent per annum, and second mortgage.

Very often, after going to town a number of times, Vasily Petrovich would come home disturbed and upset, refuse any dinner, take off his frock-coat and lie down on the bed with his face to the wall. That mysterious lottery-loan bond, part of Mother's dowry, emerged from the drawer. Up to now Petya had only heard of it once *a* year, when Vasily Petrovich crossed himself and opened the *Odessa Leaflet* to see whether it had won two hundred thousand.

One day when they came home from school Petya and Pavlik found that the piano—also part of Mother's dowry—had disappeared from the dining-room, leaving a patch of floor that looked clean and freshly painted. The room seemed so bare without it that Petya nearly burst into tears.

Then the rings disappeared from Auntie's fingers.

Finally the day came, a Sunday, when Auntie with trembling fingers pushed a thick package of bank-notes, notes of hand and a receipt signed by a notary into her reticule, put on her hat, gloves and best squirrel cape left by her late sister, and said decisively, "Vasily Petrovich, I'm going!"

"Very well," Vasily Petrovich replied dully through the door.

"Come, Petya," Auntie said resolutely. The boy was to accompany her, in case anyone tried to rob her on the way.

Auntie clutched the reticule containing their whole possessions to her chest while Petya walked grimly behind with sharp glances right and left. But there was nothing to arouse suspicion. It was Lent, the bells rang funerally over the town, and most of the people they met were old women in dark clothes returning from morning service with strings of convent-made bread-rings, soft but very sour-looking.

Madame Vasyutinskaya lived quite nearby, in a time-darkened house of limestone standing in a quiet side-street near the sea.

Petya saw an old woman in mourning, sunk deep into an old arm-chair. He had heard it said that Madame Vasyutinskaya was paralyzed and "had lost her legs," but the last bit seemed to be wrong, for he could quite plainly see feet in fur slippers on a soft footstool. The room was small and very hot; it had a tiled stove with brass fittings and a great deal of old-fashioned mahogany furniture. In the corner numerous lamps burned with blue and crimson flames before icons hung with a multitude of Easter decorations, large and small, of crystal, porcelain and gold, dangling on silk ribbons. Outside the window he could see lilac bushes and a flock of sparrows that fluttered and squabbled among the grey, bare twigs with their swelling buds.

In front of the old lady stood a Japanese table with a coffee-set, a round bast box of chocolate halvah and a silver bread-basket with convent-made bread-rings. The room smelt of coffee and the cigarettes which Madame Vasyutinskaya smoked. She glanced at Petya, nodded her massive head in its old-fashioned black bonnet and talked to Auntie a little while about the weather and politics. Then she rang a silver bell and at once an old footman in a tailcoat and soft slippers came in on his shaky legs from a neighbouring room, letting in the monotonous trilling of canaries, and placed an inlaid rosewood box on the table before his mistress.

Nervous and for some reason flushing, Auntie took the money and notes of hand from her reticule and handed them to the old woman, who put them in her box without counting them and gave Auntie a paper folded in four, bearing a number of coloured stamps—the agreement. Petya noticed that the box was lined with pink quilted satin like a wedding coach.

The old woman locked the box with a small key that hung round her neck. The sharp click gave Petya a momentary feeling of fright.

Auntie carefully tucked the agreement into her reticule. Then the old footman shuffled out noiselessly with the box, and Madame Vasyutinskaya, puffing, poured three cups of coffee out of the brass pot.

"What a lovely thing!" said Auntie, taking the dark-blue cup with its gleam of worn gold inside. "It's Gardner, isn't it?"

"Old Popov," the old woman answered in her deep baritone, and emitted two streams of tobacco smoke from her nose.

"Really? I quite took it for Gardner," said Auntie, and raising her veil, began drinking coffee in tiny, elegant sips. The old woman put a piece of chocolate halvah on a saucer and held it out to Petya.

"No, it's old Popov," she said, turning her bloated face to Auntie. "It was a wedding present from my late husband. He was a man of great taste. We had an estate near Chernigov, forty hundred acres, but after the peasants burned the house and killed my husband in 1905, I sold the land and came to live here. But I think you know all that. Until Stolypin was killed," she continued in the same wheezing monotonous baritone, "I still preserved some illusions. Now I have none. Russia needs a firm hand and the late Pyotr Arkadyevich Stolypin, peace to his soul, was the last real nobleman and administrator who could have saved the Empire from revolution. That is why they shot him. But our Emperor, God forgive me, he's worth nothing. A dish-rag.... Don't you listen," she added sternly, turning to Petya, "it's too early for you to hear such things. Eat your halvah. I tell you," and she turned her bovine eyes on Auntie and lowered her voice, "he is not God's Anointed, but a plain coward. Instead of shooting and

hanging these rabble, he flew into a panic. How could any man with sense and understanding give Russia a constitution and allow that disgraceful All-Russian talking-shop in the Tavrichesky Palace, with Yids spitting dirt at the government and openly calling for revolution!"

With the last words her voice rose to a sudden scream, so strident that even the canaries in the neighbouring room were silenced for a little while.

"And they'll get it, mark my words—revolution will come, and very soon, and then those scum will hang all decent people on the first lamppost. But I'm not such a fool as to sit here and wait for it. I had enough with my Chernigov estate. You can all do as you like, but I shall go abroad. I shall go, and leave a curse on this country with its Social-Democrats and factions, and resolutions, and strikes, and May Day meetings, and workers-of-the-world-unite! Take my land and run it as you please—if the rabble are kind enough to give their permission, that is!"

She was no longer talking, she was screaming at the top of her voice, and Petya looked with mingled terror and disgust at her eyes, rolling in frenzy.

"Excuse me," she said suddenly in her ordinary voice. "Will you be so kind as to pay the second instalment on your note of hand to my lawyer, and he will forward it to me."

Auntie quickly began preparing to go, pulling on her gloves and straightening her hat. Madame Vasyutinskaya did not stop her. When they came out of the house, they noticed open trunks in the little yard ;and coats hung on ropes to air. Evidently Madame Vasyutinskaya really did intend to leave.

WORKERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE!

Soon afterwards, the Bachei family moved to their new home. Not all at once, however. Vastly Petrovich went first to take possession and have everything in order before spring came.

Auntie and the boys were to remain in town for a little while longer, to sub-let the flat and store the furniture.

The boys were still going to school, for the fees had been paid at the beginning of the year. What they would do the next year depended on the success of the new venture.

Gavrik often visited them now. He had taken and passed the exams for three forms as an out-student; Petya was coaching him for the sixth-form exam, but now he did not refuse the fifty kopeks a lesson.

Gavrik was still working in the *Odessa Leaflet* print-shop, not as a printer's devil, however; he was already an apprentice type-setter and earning quite good wages. Sometimes he came straight from work in the evening, bringing with him the acrid, alluring smell of the print-shop. He was very apt at his job and in some ways had already outstripped his master. When he came to the Bachei home, he was no longer shy and awkward, he bore himself confidently and one day even brought a half-pound of sweets for tea. He handed the little package to Auntie, saying, "Allow me to make this little present. It's my pay-day. They're Abrikosov's caramels, I know you like them."

The misfortunes of the Bachei family -seemed to have brought Gavrik and Petya closer together. Gavrik not only sympathized with Petya—he understood his situation, which was much more important. Incidentally, from beginning to end of the whole affair he expressed his own very definite views about it all quite freely.

Vasily Petrovich's dismissal from the Faig establishment, although unpleasant, was something inevitable, for after all better to starve than to work for such a parasite, such a blood-sucker. Here, Gavrik fully approved of Vasily Petrovich's action. But to sell the piano for a song and rent a farm—this was another matter; he could not believe that a family of intellectuals would be able to till the soil with their own hands.

"You don't know a thing about it, you'll get calluses and that's all. Stolypin farmers!" he added with a smile.

Petya had noticed lately that Gavrik linked up everything with politics.

"Yes, but what was Father to do?" he asked with irritation.

"What he'd done before. Give people learning. That's what a teacher's job is."

"But if he's not allowed?"

"Eh, brother, they can't forbid anyone to teach folks."

"But what folks? Where are they?"

"He'd find them if he looked for them," said Gavrik evasively. "Well, let's get on with the lesson."

After their lessons Petya would often walk part of the way home with Gavrik, sometimes he even went as far as Near Mills. There were many things they talked of on the way, and Gavrik was not so secretive as formerly. Petya learned that there was a committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party in the town. It consisted of Beks and Meks. The Beks were the Bolsheviks and the Meks—the Mensheviks. There was a clear line between them. Terenty and all his friends belonged to the Beks.

There had been a Party conference in Prague not long before, and at this conference Ulyanov, who was also called Lenin or Frey, the one who had been sent the letter by Petya, had defeated the Meks, and now there was a real revolutionary party of the working class.

"And will there be a revolution?" asked Petya, remembering Madame Vasyutinskaya and her dreadful eyes that rolled like those of a madwoman.

"All in good time," said Gavrik. "We've got to get our forces together. Then we'll see."

Once he pulled out of his pocket a dirty canvas bag filled with something hard, and held it up before Petya's nose.

"See that?" he winked.

"What is it? Buttons for tiddly-winks?" asked Petya, surprised. He had never thought Gavrik could still go in for silly things like that.

"Aha!" said Gavrik. "Like a game?" And his eyes sparkled slyly. Petya held out his hand.

"Let's see."

"Hands off," said Gavrik sternly and hid the bag behind his back.

Petya realized that this must be something very different from buttons.

"I suppose it's the kind of buttons that nearly blew up our kitchen that time," he said, remembering how the pans had leaped on the stove and the macaroni dangled from the ceiling.

"Not quite, but something like it," said Gavrik, who evidently wanted to show off but could not make up his mind. "Guess again, you're getting nearer."

"Show me!" Petya pleaded, burning with curiosity.

"Not now."

"When?"

"Don't be so inquisitive," said Gavrik and pushed the bag deep into his trouser pocket.

Petya, offended, asked no more but sulked in silence.

When the friends drew level with the depot, however, Gavrik led Petya behind a corner. He looked round carefully, then pulled out the bag and unfastened the knotted string with his teeth. He tipped something out on to his palm and held it under Petya's eyes. His palm was filled with little metal pieces that smelt strongly of printer's ink.

"Type," he said mysteriously.

Petya did not understand.

"Type for printing. Letters.'"

Petya had never seen real type. As a child, it is true, he had been given a toy printing-set in a flat tin box. There had been several dozen rubber letters, a

frame, a pad soaked with thick ink, and a pair of pincers for handling the letters. You could set a number of words in the frame and then stamp them on paper, making printed lines with black strips between them. But of course, real printing was something quite different.

"And can you set type and print yourself?"

"Of course!"

"And will it be just as clear as in the newspaper?"

"Just as clear."

"Set something, show me."

"Set something, eh?" Gavrik thought a moment. "All right. But let's go on a bit first."

They went round the depot, crawled under trucks, ran down from the embankment and found themselves in a deep gully thick with dry weeds from last year. There they sat down on the ground. From his pocket Gavrik took a steel thing with a clip which he called a composing-stick and started quickly setting letter after letter of type in a long line.

He then took a stump of pencil from his pocket and rubbed the lead over the letters. Again he delved into that bottomless pocket, took out a scrap of clean newsprint, laid the composing-stick on it and pressed down with his hand.

"Ready!" He held out the paper to Petya, but without letting go of it.

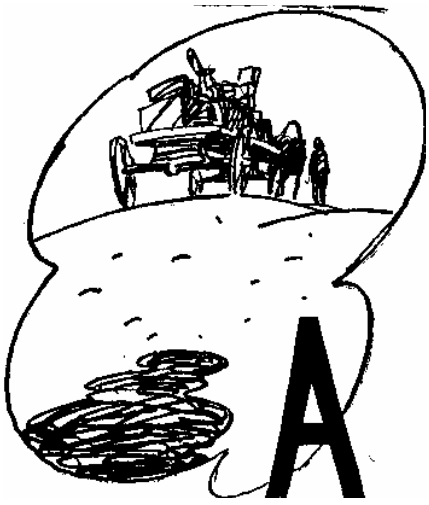
"Workers of the world, unite!" Petya read these strange words faintly but clearly printed in real newspaper lettering.

"What's that?" he asked, admiring the deft speed with which Gavrik had done it all.

"What we've been talking about," said Gavrik; he tore the paper into minute fragments and let the wind carry them away. "But remember!" He wagged a finger smelling of kerosene under Petya's nose.

"You needn't worry."

Gavrik went up close to Petya and breathed into his ear, "I've got out fifteen bags of type like this."



THE NEW HOME

At the end of March Auntie finally managed to sub-let the flat on good terms. Now the furniture had to be taken care of, and then they could finally move. Gavrik talked it over with Terenty and then suggested that the furniture be put in their shed at Near Mills to save storage costs; and Petya could live there too, until the end of the school exams.

This seemed ideal, and Auntie agreed gladly. She herself decided to go and stay with an old school friend, taking Pavlik with her.

So one fine day two great flat carts called platforms, each drawn by a pair of horses, drove into the yard. And the Bachei furniture was carried out.

They had all thought there was a great deal of furniture in the apartment, they had feared two platforms would not hold it all. It turned out, however, that the second platform was only half filled. And when tables and chairs were stood upside down on the platforms and fastened on with thick ropes, the suites which to Petya had always looked so fine and expensive, especially the drawing-room suite with its golden silk upholstery, lost all their grandeur.

The bright sunshine seemed to bring all defects into glaring prominence, every scratch, crack and tear. The wash-stand looked particularly forlorn with its broken pedal and the crack right across the marble. The bronze dining-room lamp became insignificant with the shade and bronze ball removed and thrown down amid the supporting chains on the floor; it looked a silly, old-fashioned thing that nobody in their senses would want. Petya's most unpleasant surprise, however, was the bookcase which had always been known in the Bachei family as "Vasily Petrovich's library." Empty of books, lying on its side, it looked miserably small, almost like a toy, and all the books—the famous Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopaedia, Karamzin's *History of the State of Russia,* Pushkin, Lermontov, Tolstoi, Gogol, Turgenev, Dostoyevsky, Nekrasov, Sheller-Mikhailov and Pomyalovsky—taken all together, made up about a dozen piles strongly tied with string. In fact, all these things as they were carried out did not look like solid, dignified furniture at all, but just old junk.

Petya climbed up beside the driver of the first platform to show him the way. Dunyasha, her nose swollen with crying, sat on the second, holding the mirror that reflected the street at a fantastic, dizzy angle.

Auntie, standing by the open gate with Pavlik beside her, crossed herself and for some reason waved her handkerchief.

All the way Petya was afraid he might meet some of the boys from school. Although he would never have admitted it even to himself, he was ashamed of

their furniture and ashamed to be taking it to such a poor quarter of the town as Near Mills. It was not so easy to get accustomed to the idea that now they too were "poor."

Terenty and Gavrik were not at home, only the Chernoivanenko mother and daughter were there to meet him. Motya was more excited than anyone else, she followed each article as it was carried across the front garden into the shed, which had long been cleared for them.

"Oh, Petya, what beautiful chairs you've got!" she cried in sincere admiration, and touched the silk upholstery of an armchair, rubbed down in places so that the white threads showed.

Zhenka appeared with a crowd of boys. They swarmed round the platforms at once, climbing with bare feet on to the wheels, feeling the bronze ball from the lamp and turning the taps of the wash-stand; Zhenka himself actually climbed on to the box, seized the reins, assumed a daredevil expression and shouted, "Whoa there, damn you!" A few cuffs, however, soon scattered the whole gang and they tore down the unpaved street, raising clouds of dust.

When the furniture was stowed in the shed and the platforms drove away, Dunyasha shouldered a bundle containing her clothes and icons and set off on foot straight across the steppe to the cottage, which was not far from there as the crow flies.

"Well, so now you're going to live here with us at Near Mills," said Motya gaily, then noticed Petya's downcast look and added, "But whit's the matter? Don't you like it here? You mustn't think it isn't nice, it is, it's awfully nice. The snowdrops are out on the steppe, just the other side of the common, and there'll soon be violets in the gullies. We can go and pick them sometimes. Wouldn't you like it?"

Gavrik soon came home from the print shop and stealthily showed Petya another bag of type.

"That's the sixteenth," he said with a wink.

"Look out, one of these days you may get caught," said Petya.

"Well, if I'm caught, I'm caught," sighed Gavrik. "Can't be helped."

The next moment, however, he was gaily singing a comic song very popular on the outskirts of Odessa: "When they caught him, well, they socked him—hey! hey! hey!"

At first glance there might not seem to be much sense in the words, but Petya always felt some hidden meaning, some daring, fighting challenge in that song.

They arranged a nook for Petya among the neatly stacked furniture in the shed, with bed, table, lamp and bookshelf. There was plenty of room, so Gavrik brought his own bed in too, to live with Petya.

Terenty came home from work, nodded to Petya and cast a business-like look round the shed. With \a dissatisfied grunt he rearranged the furniture to occupy less room and put a brick under the bookcase to stop it wobbling. When he had finished there was even more space.

"But mind you behave yourselves, no fooling. I know you—you'll start smoking, or stop each other studying." He turned to Petya. "You'll have to work hard or they'll fail you, sure as I stand here. They won't forgive your dad for Blizhensky. They're all the same gang. You'll see that I am right. Well...."

He slipped the bag of tools off his shoulder, threw off his oily jacket and went to the bowl standing on a bench by the fence. Motya gave him a piece of

blue-veined washing soap, stepped up on a low stool and poured water from a jug over his large, black hands. Then he bent his head for her, and washed face, head and neck, spluttering, ridding himself of metal dust and smoke. His washing took a long time, he continued until he was as fresh and pink as a baby pig. Then he took the embroidered towel hanging over Motya's shoulder and dried himself with the same gusto.

Petya, meanwhile, was digesting with alarm Terenty's final words which he believed without the faintest hesitation, particularly as he himself had long felt something cold and threatening in the faces of the director and school inspector whenever he passed them.

Petya was no longer surprised to find Terenty so well informed about all their circumstances, even the incident with Blizhensky. He had stopped regarding Terenty as a plain master mechanic at the railway workshops, earning good wages, maybe, but still only a workman. Petya understood well that in Terenty's other, secret life, which was called "Party work," he was not only bigger and more important than Vasily Petrovich, he was much more important than the school director, than Mr. Faig, than the head of the Education Department, perhaps even more important than the Governor of Odessa, Tolmachov.

They all had supper together. Terenty's wife picked up the prongs and pulled an iron pot out of the stove, country-style. The pot contained cabbage soup without meat. It was followed by a pan of potatoes fried in sunflower oil. Everything was eaten with wooden spoons. The rye bread was fresh and very fragrant. A head of garlic and some pods of red pepper were on the table, but only Terenty and Gavrik took any; they put the red pepper in the cabbage soup and rubbed the garlic on the crust of bread.

Petya, not to be outdone by his friend, also took a polished, fiery-red pod of pepper, put it in his soup and mashed it.

"Oh, don't!" said Motya in a frightened whisper.

But Petya had already managed to swallow a mouthful of the soup and was now sitting, tears in his eyes, his tongue thrust out, feeling as though he breathed fire.

"Maybe you'd like some garlic too?" asked Gavrik innocently.

"Go to hell!" said Petya with difficulty, wiping the tears from his eyes.

When they rose from table, Petya, like a well-brought-up boy, crossed himself before the dark icon of St. Nicholas—the one he had seen as a boy in Grandad Chernoivanenko's hut, bowed first to the mistress of the house, then to the master and said, "Thank you most humbly." To which the mistress answered kindly, "Good health go with it. Excuse the supper."

That was how Petya's life in Near Mills began.

They rose at six in the morning and washed in the yard, pouring cold water from the well over each other from a jug, ate a piece of black bread spread with plum jelly and washed it down with tea.

Then the three men—Terenty, Gavrik and Petya—set off for work. They went out of the gate together just as the factory whistles sounded from all sides in a long-drawn-out, imperative yet indifferent wail. The mist of a March morning trembled from their monotonous chorus.

Gates creaked and banged all over Near Mills and the streets filled with men hurrying to work. There were more and more of them, they overtook one

another, greeted one another in passing, gathered into small groups.

Terenty walked quickly, in silence, his tools clanking softly in his bag. Petya and Gavrik could hardly keep up with him. Most of the workers greeted Terenty and he replied, mechanically raising the little cap like cyclist's wear from his big, round head. Soon he joined a large group turning into a side-street while Petya and Gavrik went straight on together.

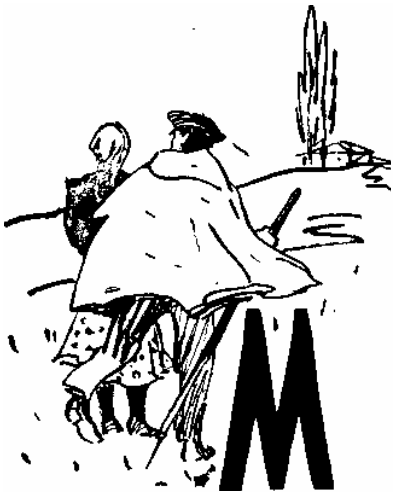
They parted company at the station, Petya turning right to the school while Gavrik, casually raising one large finger to the peak of a cap exactly like Terenty's, went on through the town to the print-shop.

All the time he was at school Petya had a strange feeling of awkwardness, timidity, alienation. He kept away from the other boys. When the long recess came, he looked for Pavlik, and the two brothers walked silently up and down the corridors, holding each other's bells. Pavlik's face was very serious, even grim.

On returning to Near Mills, Petya went into the shed and settled down to his lessons, working with desperate intensity as though preparing for battle.

In the evening Terenty and Gavrik came home and they all had supper. After that Petya drilled Gavrik in Latin, and Gavrik in his turn drilled Motya in all subjects—for she wanted to enter the fourth form at school.

It was eleven when they finally went to bed. Petya and Gavrik put out the lamp and then lay talking in the dark. Although, to be exact, it was Petya who did most of the talking. Gavrik had little to say, only pushed his head deeper into the pillow. After the day's work he liked to have a good sleep.



SNOWDROPS

More than once Petya tried to tell Gavrik about the girl he fell in love with abroad; he would introduce it with a rapid description of Vesuvius and the Blue Grotto in Capri with its magical underwater lighting that makes hands and faces look as though made of blue glass; but when he began to speak in hints and half-sentences of that wonderful first meeting at the station in Naples, he found Gavrik was already asleep, even starting to snore.

Once, however, Petya did manage to tell Gavrik about his romance before his friend finally dropped off to sleep. "And what happened after that?" asked Gavrik, more from politeness than interest.

"Nothing," sighed Petya. "We parted for ever." "Well, that's very sad, of course," said Gavrik, frankly yawning. "What was her name?"

"Her name?" said Petya slowly and mysteriously; it was a very awkward moment. With a shade of secret grief he said, "Ah, what does a name matter!"

"Well, what was she like, at least—dark or fair?" asked Gavrik.

"Neither dark nor fair, more ... how can I explain? Her hair was sort of chestnut, or better, dark chestnut," Petya answered with painful exactitude.

"Uhuh, I understand," mumbled Gavrik. "Well, let's go to sleep."

"No, wait a minute," said Petya, whose imagination was only beginning to get to work. "Don't go to sleep yet. I want you to advise me, as pal—what ought I to do now?"

"Write to her," said Gavrik. "You know her address, don't you?"

"Ah, what would that help!" said Petya in grief-stricken accents.

"But if you love her," said Gavrik judicially.

"What's love?" said the disillusioned Petya and quoted Lermontov, slightly out of place:

But love is no solace—too fleeting it is,
Unequal to life-long devotion.

"In that case, shut up and let me get to sleep," grunted Gavrik, turning round on the other side and pulling the pillow over his ear.

Not another word could be got from him.

But Petya lay awake for a long time.

He could see the moon like a greenish sickle peeping in through the tiny window. Time after time he heard the gate creak. There was a murmur of talk and more than once people came into the little yard and went out again.

"Don't go straight there, go round by the marshalling yard." The voice was Terenty's, evidently he had had visitors again.

Petya began thinking of that girl, but somehow he could no longer see her clearly. The picture was hazy— a braid with a black ribbon, a cinder in his eye, the blizzard in the mountains—and that was all. It seemed that he had simply forgotten her.

It was rather chilly in the shed. Petya took down his Swiss cape from the wall and spread it over his bed. Now he saw himself as the lonely traveller in a poor shepherd's hut. There he lay, rolled in his cape, forgotten by all, with a broken heart and a tormented soul. And she whom he so loved, at this very moment perhaps she was.... Petya made a last desperate effort to picture what she could be doing, but instead found his mind drifting to quite different thoughts—thoughts of the corning exams, the new life waiting for him on the farm, and strangest thing of all—thoughts of Motya. Really, it wouldn't be such a bad idea to go out to the steppe with her sometime to pick snowdrops.

It had never before entered his head that Motya could possibly be the heroine of a romance. But now it seemed the most natural thing in the world, he was surprised he had not thought of it. After all, she was pretty, she loved him—of that Petya had no doubt whatsoever, and most important of all, she was always there, at hand.

These thoughts induced a pleasant excitement, and instead of going to sleep in tears, Petya drifted into slumber with a Languid, self-satisfied smile and wakened with a feeling of something new and extremely pleasant.

Instead of sitting down to his lessons when he came home from school, he sought out Motya, who was helping her mother make potato cakes, and went straight to the point.

"Well, how about it?" he said with a condescending smile.

"How about what?" asked Motya, diffident as always when talking to Petya.

"Have you forgotten?"

"What?" Motya repeated even more diffidently, and glanced up at the boy from under her brows with sweet, innocent eyes.

"I thought you intended to go and pick snowdrops."

She blushed and her fingers began crumbling the edge of a potato cake.

"Do you mean it?"

"Of course. But if you don't want to go, well, it doesn't matter."

"Mummy, can you manage without me?" asked Motya. "I promised to show Petya where the snowdrops and violets grow."

"Go along, children, go and gather your flowers," said her mother affectionately.

Motya ran behind the curtain, unfastening her apron as she went. She put on her best goatskin shoes and the coat she had rather grown out of during the winter, and flung her braid over her shoulder. She was terribly excited, and a faint dew of perspiration appeared on her neat nose.

Meanwhile, Petya, deliberately unhurried, strode nonchalantly to the shed, put on his cloak, picked up his alpenstock and presented himself to Motya in his sombre glory—somewhat spoiled by the school cap.

"Well, let's go," said Petya with all the grand indifference he could muster.

"Yes, let's go," Motya answered in a very small voice, her head down, and led the way to the gate, her new shoes squeaking loudly.

While they crossed the common where the cows were already grazing on last year's grass, Petya turned over the very important question of which Motya was to be— Olga or Tatyana? In any case he, of course, remained Yevgeny Onegin. He selected the old version of Yevgeny Onegin as the easiest, to avoid too much trouble. Motya was not worth anything more complicated. Now he must decide quickly whether she would be Olga or Tatyana, and then make a beginning.

In appearance she was not a bit like Tatyana, she would make a much better Olga—if it weren't for that coat with its too short sleeves, of course, and those dreadful squeaking shoes that could surely be heard all over Near Mills.

Here was the end of the common, time to start. Petya quickly merged Tatyana and Olga, getting quite a suitable hybrid whom he could preach to in the best Onegin style:

And, in some quiet place apart
Instruct the lady of his heart. . .

and yet whose hand he could tenderly press; and best of all there would be no need for kissing, the very thought of which made Petya thoroughly uncomfortable.

He would continue to be Onegin but with a faint touch of Lensky which, however, should not hamper him in following the great rule:

A woman's love for us increases .
The less we love her, sooth to say. . .

It could become a splendid romance. It was rather a drawback, of course, that he really did like Motya. That was quite out of place if he were to be Onegin. But Petya resolved to treat his feelings with contempt, and as soon as they were out on the steppe he said sternly, "Motya, I've something very serious to say to you."

The girl's heart turned over and she halted, alarmed by his grim look.

"Have you ever loved anyone?" asked Petya with still greater sternness.

"Yes," answered Motya in a small voice.

Petya's face showed an involuntary smile of self-satisfaction, but on the instant he banished it and asked, looking straight into her eyes,

"Who?"

"A lot of people," answered Motya simply.

Petya bit back the word "fool," that nearly slipped out, and set to work patiently explaining what love was, what it meant in general and what it meant in particular. Motya understood and flushed crimson.

"Well then?" Petya asked insistently.

"You know for yourself," Motya whispered almost inaudibly, raising happy, tear-filled eyes to his face.

She was so sweet in that moment that Petya was ready to fall in love with her, very much like Lensky with Olga, in spite of the squeaking shoes and the coat bought on the market. But such a very easy victory could not satisfy him, it was too commonplace.

"So I can count on your friendship?" he asked.

"Yes, of course," said Motya. "Always."

"Then I must tell you my secret. Only promise that it shall remain between ourselves."

"I give my word, I swear it by the true Cross," said Motya and quickly crossed herself several times. "May I die here on this spot if I ever say a word."

"I have fallen in love," said Petya mournfully.

He stood in silence for a moment, then told Motya about his romance, word for word as he had told it to Gavrik in the shed.

Motya listened in silence, her arms hanging despondently, and when he finished she asked in a voice unlike her own, "What is her name?"

"What does a name matter!" Petya answered.

"And you love her very, very much?" said Motya in lifeless tones.

"That's just it," Petya answered.

"I wish you all happiness," said Motya in a barely audible voice.

"Yes, but I want your advice as a friend—what ought I to do now? How should I act?"

"Write her a letter if you love her so much."

"But what is love? 'Love is no solace—too fleeting it is, unequal to life-long devotion,'" said Petya, in a. somewhat dramatic sing-song.

"I wish you all happiness," said Motya. Her eyes suddenly narrowed like a cat's, almost frightening Petya. Then she turned and walked rapidly back the way they had come.

"Stop, where are you going? What about the snowdrops?" Petya called out.

"I wish you all happiness," she said again, without turning.

Petya ran after her, the cape hampered him but he overtook her. She flung off the hand he put on her shoulder and quickened her steps.

"Silly girl, I was only joking, can't you understand I was joking? Can't you take a joke?" Petya mumbled. "Why do you have to lose your temper like that?"

Now that she was angry he liked her twice as much as before.

Motya ran all the way across the common and only slowed her pace to a walk when she reached the street.

Petya walked beside her, protesting:

"I was only joking. Can't you understand that? Silly girl, to lose your temper this way!"

"I've not lost my temper," she said quietly.

The storm of jealousy had passed, she was the old Motya again.

"Let's make up, then," Petya proposed.

"But I haven't quarrelled with you," she answered. She even forced a faint smile because she did not want people to see them quarrelling in the street.

Petya was embarrassed but inwardly triumphant. Taken all round it had been an excellent love scene.

It was Zhenya who spoiled it all. He had long been watching them, together with his faithful followers. And now the whole gang of boys followed them at a cautious distance chanting in chorus, "Spoony, spoony, krssy-kissy-coo!"

THE LENA MASSACRE

One day at the beginning of April Gavrik came home from the print-shop much later than usual. Petya was in the shed going over his geometry.

"Soldiers have fired on the workers at the Lena gold-fields," Gavrik said before he was properly inside, and without removing his cap crossed over and sat down on the edge of his bed.

Petya already knew from the talk he had heard in Near Mills that far away in Siberia, in the dense taiga by the Lena River, there were gold-fields where workers lived in horrible conditions. He also knew that at one of the worst of these, the workers had been on strike ever since February and had even sent deputations to the other fields. The strike was led by the Beks, while the Meks were trying to persuade the workers to call off the strike and make peace with the management. But the workers would not listen to the Meks and the strike spread. Over six thousand were out. That was the last news which had come by devious routes from the banks of the Lena.

Now Gavrik sat, his hands between his knees, staring at the green shade of the lamp that was reflected in his fixed eyes. His breathing was slow but deep, like a succession of sighs—evidently he had hurried home from the print-shop.

At first Petya did not take in the full significance of Gavrik's words. It had been said so simply, almost without expression: "Soldiers have fired on the workers." He looked again at Gavrik, at his frozen, haggard face, and realization flooded his mind.

"How—how did they fire?" he asked, feeling his face stiffen like Gavrik's.

"Just like that. Quite simple," said Gavrik roughly. "From rifles. Company, aim! Fire!"

"How do you know?"

"I set the dispatch myself. Nonpareil, six point. It came in three hours ago. It's to be in today's issue— if they don't take it out. You can expect any dirt from them. Well, I'm off," he said, rising with a jerk.

"Where are you going?"

"To Terenty at the workshops. Seems he's doing overtime on the night-shift."

With that Gavrik turned and went.

Petya felt he could not bear it alone in the shed, he ran after Gavrik and overtook him by the gate. Silently they walked together through the transparent darkness of the April night. The first apple blossom was out in the gardens, but in Siberia it was still winter with hard frost, and the Lena River lay ice-bound under its covering of snow.

Petya had come out without a coat and soon felt chilly. He thrust his hands into the sleeves of his school jacket and huddled his elbows to him as he walked

beside Gavrik. A church clock somewhere struck eleven. In the houses everyone was asleep and the windows were dark; the only lamp was the electric light at the gates of the railway workshops, that cast its reflection on the lines. The watchman was dozing, the bottom of his sheepskin peeped through the open door of his shelter.

Petya and Gavrik went round the locomotive shop, and peered through the dusty glass, broken here and there. Petya could see the flickering light of a furnace, and the great bulk of an engine slung in chains from the roof. Workers walked about beneath it. Petya at once recognized Terenty, carrying an oily steel connecting-rod on his shoulder, one hand steadying an end wrapped in a black rag.

A railway engineer in a uniform cap and a tunic with shoulder-straps stood, feet astride, at one side, holding a large blueprint as though it were a newspaper he was reading.

All this Petya had seen many times before, it contained nothing unusual, still less menacing. But now a chill of fear ran through him. He felt that any moment those chains might snap and the pendant engine crash down with all its giant weight upon the men standing underneath. For an instant the picture was so real before him that he shut his eyes.

But at that moment Gavrik put two fingers into his mouth and whistled. Terenty turned and looked at the dark glass of the window that dimly reflected the electric lights in the shop. Then with a smooth heavy movement of his great body he slid the rod from his shoulder and carried it on outstretched arms away to the side. Soon after that he appeared round the corner and came up to the boys.

"What's the matter?" he asked Gavrik, but looked at Petya.

"Soldiers have fired on the workers at the Lena gold-fields," said Gavrik in a low voice. "A dispatch came from Irkutsk today. I ran off eight copies just in case." He handed Terenty a sheet of fresh proofs.

Terenty turned his back to the lighted window and read the dispatch. Petya could not see the expression of his face but felt it must be dreadful. Suddenly Terenty bent, snatched up a piece of clinker from the ground and flung it against the wall with such force that it shattered to fragments.

For some time he stood breathing heavily, mastering himself, then he led Gavrik aside and they talked quickly for a moment.

On the way back Gavrik several times left Petya and disappeared for a little while. Once Petya saw him go to somebody's gate and thrust a white paper into the crack. He guessed that this was a copy of the dispatch.

They returned to their shed, put out the light and went to bed, but it was a long time before the boys could sleep. Petya found himself listening fearfully to the sounds of the night. He had the feeling that something terrible was going to begin. Shouting crowds would run down the street, a fire would break out somewhere, there would be revolver shots. But everything was quiet.

The pointsman's horn sounded from the railway crossing; then a goods train passed. A cart rattled along the uneven road a long way off, he could hear an empty bucket banging under it. Then came the third cock-crow, prolonged and sleepy, caught up by bird after bird throughout Near Mills. That was followed by the factory whistles and then the creaking of gates.

The day passed as usual. At recess, however, Petya noticed some of the big

boys reading a newspaper under the stairs, and heard the whispered words, "There's trouble at the Lena gold-fields."

Gavrik came home even later than the previous day— he had waited for the latest news—and brought a big bundle of proofs with him. They were of dispatches giving the details of the Lena massacre. Five hundred killed and wounded. Petya went cold with horror.

Night came. Terenty said a few words to Gavrik, then they both went out. Petya wanted to go too, but they refused to take him. Left alone, he went to bed, pulled his cape right over his head and fell asleep. Soon, however, he was awake again.

Everything was very quiet. Petya lay on his back, eyes open, trying to picture five hundred killed and wounded. But it was impossible, no matter how he strained his imagination. All he could see was an indistinct picture of a snow-covered field strewn with the dark forms of dead workers. The meaning of the picture was immeasurably worse than the picture itself and this inconsistency tormented Petya, and would let him think of nothing else.

Suddenly it occurred to him that five hundred was just the number of pupils and teachers at his school. He pictured the corridors, staircases, class-rooms, gym and the assembly hall full of dead and wounded pupils and teachers, the pools of blood on the tile floors, the screams, the groans, the confusion....

A shudder ran through him.

But still it was not the same, because this was only fancy while that had been *real*. Those bodies were real, not imaginary, and Petya started to remember all the dead bodies he had seen.

He remembered Mother in her coffin, looking like a bride, her lips blackened from medicine and a strip of paper on her forehead. He remembered Uncle Misha in his frock-coat, his arms with their bony white hands crossed on his breast. He remembered Vitya Seroshevsky, one of the boys in the fourth form who had died of diphtheria, looking like a large doll in his blue uniform. Grandad— Mother's father—with his bald head reflecting the light of the candles. An infantry general who had been taken past the house in an open coffin on a gun-carriage, with all his decorations carried on a velvet cushion in front.

But none of these had been killed, they had died a natural death, they were taken to the cemetery with wreaths and incense and music and singing and lanterns on crape-swathed staffs. However dreadful they might look, these motionless forms still bore human semblance amid all the funereal trappings, and they could not give Petya any idea of those hundreds who lay prone in the snow, and his torment continued.

Suddenly he saw again what had long been thrust away into the very back of his memory and hardly ever came to the surface, because it was so much more terrible than anything else.

Petya remembered 1905, Terenty's bandaged head with blood trickling down his temple, he remembered the room with its smashed furniture full of the smoke of gunfire, and the man with the indifferent waxen face and a black hole above the open eye who lay so uncomfortably on the floor among empty cartridge clips and cartridge eases. He remembered the two Cossacks galloping past, dragging after them on a rope the corpse of a man Petya knew, Joseph Karlovich, who owned the shooting-gallery, and leaving a long, strangely bright trail of red on

the grey, dusty road.

Again Petya saw the snow-covered field and the dead bodies. But it no longer tormented him with unreality, for now he understood the meaning it held. What it meant was that some people killed others because those others did not want to be slaves.

Rage flooded Petya. He bit the pillow to hold back tears. But they came nevertheless. In the morning he rose, weary from a sleepless night, with dark circles under his eyes, haggard and sombre.

Gavrik and Terenty had not yet come home. Motya, a grey knitted shawl round her head and shoulders, silently gave him a mug of tea and a hunk of bread and jam. She 'had not yet combed her hair, she stole fearful looks at the boy and shivered in the chill of early morning—probably she had not slept all night either. Her mother was washing clothes out in the yard, with iridescent soap-bubbles rising from her tub. She mournfully wished Petya good morning.

On this day Petya set off for school alone. The streets looked just as they always did. Workers walked in groups on their way to the morning-shift. They seemed to go faster than usual. Groups knotted together and in some places formed crowds. Passing them, Petya could feel hostile looks cast at his cap with its badge, his bright buttons and belt with the uniform buckle.

Although the early sunshine filled the street with warm, rosy light and the air was clear and fresh with the scents of April, although the little shunters whistled gaily to one another as usual, an invisible funereal shadow seemed to lie over everything.

Petya saw the elderly local policeman pacing his beat down the street. But at the cross-roads he saw another policeman, one he did not know. Petya greeted the old policeman as usual with a courteous lift of his cap and passed the stranger with head down; but he could feel the man examining him from head to foot with fierce eyes in a young, soldierly face.

News-boys were running about the town shouting, "Lena events, full report, five hundred killed and wounded!"

It was strangely quiet at the school, both at lessons and during recess. On his way home, before he got to Near Mills, Petya heard a factory whistle, then another, and a third, until their chorus made the air vibrate.

At the cross-roads where the strange policeman had stood in the morning, Petya found a thick crowd that swelled with every minute as people joined it singly or in groups, running out from all the nearby streets, gardens and waste lots.

He realized that this was a strike, and the men in this crowd were the workers from various mills and factories who had just downed tools.

He wanted to turn back and go another way, but a fresh crowd swelled up behind him, carrying him along with it. The two masses of people joined and Petya found himself in the middle, hemmed in on all sides. He tried to get out but his satchel hindered him. One strap broke and the satchel slipped down. With an effort Petya twisted round, slid it off his shoulder and held it in front of him, pushing away the backs and elbows that pressed against him.

Petya was too small to see what was going on in front, all he knew was that he was being carried along somewhere, that the crowd had some definite objective and that somebody was guiding its movement. He began to feel a little calmer and with the corner of his satchel straightened the cap that had been

pushed to one side.

The people moved very slowly. There was nothing menacing in their movement, as Petya had thought at first, rather it was resolute, tense and business-like.

The factory whistles which had drowned out every other sound gradually died away, and he could hear the hum of voices.

At last everyone stopped. Petya saw the long roofs of the repair workshops and felt railway lines under his feet—he stumbled and would have fallen but for somebody's big, strong hand. Then there was a general move forward again, and frantic police whistles.

The crowd separated into groups and Petya saw the familiar gates of the workshops. They were closed and before them the policeman with the fierce eyes was running to and fro, sabre in hand, now and then blowing hard on his whistle and shouting, "Disperse or I fire!"

Another policeman, the old man Petya knew, kept moving about aimlessly in front of the crowd, waving his hands like an orchestra conductor and pleading in lachrymose tones, "Gentlemen, do be sensible, gentlemen, do be sensible!"

"Come on, break down the gates," said a man in an old railway cap with a red band on the sleeve of his wadded jacket; he was standing on the roof of the engine shop. His voice was not loud but it carried everywhere. Evidently this was one of the leaders.

The wrought-iron gates squealed on their rusty hinges and began to give in under the pressure of the crowd. There was the sound of a chain snapping. One leaf of the gates, torn away, fell with a rattle in the yard, the other hung crookedly from its brick gate-post.

The crowd rushed in. Everything became confused.

Later on Petya learned that the management had tried to crush the strike by bringing in strike-breakers and locking the gates.

Once inside, the crowd scattered among the shops, and then Petya saw something like the kind of game children play, only the players were angry men. The shop door opened and men ran wildly out, followed by other men who overtook them and flogged them on the head and neck with oily rags twisted into hard ropes as they ducked and dodged. It was like a game of "tag." But nobody laughed or shouted, and one of the fleeing men had blood trickling from his nose; he smeared it over his face with the sleeve of his torn shirt as he ran.

A small open truck appeared at the shop door, pushed by a couple of dozen workers with tense, determined faces. And there in the truck, his legs drawn up awkwardly, his hands gripping the sides, sat the railway engineer whom Petya has seen the night he had gone with Gavrik to the workshops. His cap was back to front, which gave his handsome face with its well-tended beard a very stupid look.

Zhenya Chernoivanenko and the boys who had shouted "Spoony, spoony, kissy-kissy-coo" after Petya and Motya, zealously helped the adults to push the truck.

Petya was not frightened any longer, nor did the crowd seem alarming. He was caught up in the general mood and ran after the truck, his brows drawn tangrily together. He pushed some of the boys aside, got his satchel against the edge of the truck and began shoving with the others. He felt as though it were his effort alone that moved it.

As soon as the truck and its burden emerged from the factory gates they were greeted with shouts and whistles from all sides. Some of the men had picked up the policeman with the fierce eyes. Holding him by the shoulders and top-boots', they gave him a swing and tossed him on to the engineer. His sabre was gone, and so was his revolver.

The other policeman, the old one, was not thrown into the truck; he got a couple of blows on the back of the head with a hard twisted rag and shambled away by the fence, without sabre, revolver or cap, smiling foolishly.

The truck was pushed for about half a mile, then abandoned on the line, and Petya, Zhenya and the other boys went back to the workshop. But everybody had gone, only a few workers with shot-guns and red arm-bands paced up and down by the smashed gates.

Petya and Zhenya made their way home through strangely deserted streets and lanes. Motya was standing by the gate -and at once started scolding Zhenya:

"You little ruffian, you tramp, where've you been all this time? And as for you," she turned on Petya, "you ought to be ashamed of yourself, taking a child to a strike! Just look at yourself, if your father could see you!"

Ever since that walk to get snowdrops Motya had had a tendency to find fault with Petya.

He looked down at his boots all scratched by clinker, at his crushed satchel with the broken strap, at the buckle of his belt pushed to one side.

"You're all dirty," Motya went on. "Go and get washed quickly, I'll fetch water for you."

"Stop ordering us about!" said Zhenya. He pulled out of his pocket the whistle which had only recently hung round the neck of the old policeman and blew a shrill blast.

"You scoundrel! You little ruffian!" Motya threw up her hands, but then surrendered and burst into a fit of childlike laughter.

At that moment an open cab appeared in the distance. Swaying over the ruts, wheels rattling, it raced down the street. Men with red arm-bands bumped on the seats and shouted something as they passed each gate.

Petya saw Terenty among them, waving his little cap. His face was red and excited which made the white scar on his temple stand out all the more sharply.

"Out to the common!" he shouted, pointing ahead with his cap, hardly aware that it was his own house he was passing.

Petya flung his satchel over the fence and raced after Motya and Zhenya. The common was already black with people.

The sun had only just sunk behind the barrows and great clouds sailing through the sky seemed to shed their own light over the meeting. Terenty stood erect on the seat of the cab, surrounded by the crowd. With one hand he steadied himself on the driver's shoulder, and gestured energetically with the other. His voice carried to Petya in fragments borne on gusts of wind. Sometimes he could make out whole sentences.

The wrathful voice that seemed to fly with the breeze over the silent crowd, over the quiet steppe, filled Petya with a burning sense of struggle for freedom. His heart beat hard. And when the people sang in discord, "You fell a victim in the fight" and there was a flicker of movement as heads were bared, Petya too removed his cap and clutched it to his breast with both hands, singing with the others. He could not hear himself, but beside him he could hear the high voice of

Motya as she stood on tiptoe, her neck stretched, singing enthusiastically:

"... Fresh ranks of the people have risen to fight...."

Petya had the feeling that in a moment mounted Cossacks would dash out from somewhere and a massacre would begin. But everything was quiet, and the silhouettes of the sentries stationed on the hillocks and barrows were outlined black against the glow of the sunset.

The meeting ended and the people dispersed as quickly and inconspicuously as they had gathered. The common emptied. But on the young grass among crushed dandelions Petya saw a great number of sticks, iron bolts and pieces of brick which the workers had brought with them, just in case. Then Terenty and Gavrik appeared. They walked in step, hands in pockets, looking well satisfied with the day's work.

"Come on, come on," said Terenty, passing one hand over Motya's cheek and holding out the other to Petya. "Don't dawdle. It's true there are meetings and demonstrations all over the town and the police don't know which way to turn, and Tolmachov's sitting at home wondering what to do, but all the same.... We'd better be getting along."

This time, however, the police evidently were at a loss, and Governor Tolmachov did not venture to send for troop's. Throughout the twenty-four hours of the strike, not a single soldier or policeman was seen about Near Mills, except for the old local policeman who spent the whole day going from house to house, begging tearfully for his sabre and revolver. He came to the Chernoivanenkos' too, and Terenty went out into the yard to talk to him.

"Terenty, lad," he pleaded, "I knew you when you were in diddies. Have a good heart. Tell your lads to give me my weapons back, or I'll be put out of the police. They're the property of the Crown."

Terenty frowned.

"What d'you mean by *my* lads? Think what you're saying."

"As if you didn't know yourself," said the old man with a wink, and added guilelessly, "your lads, the ones that are revolutionaries. You're their chief, aren't you?"

Terenty took the man by the shoulder and led him out of the gate.

"Get along with you, old 'un! And don't babble of things you know nothing about. Or if you do—better keep off the streets at night. Get that?"

"Ah, Terenty, Terenty." The old policeman sighed and shambled along to the next house.

The following day the strike ended and everything went on as before. Factory whistles filled the air every morning just as they had, but now it was no longer cold and misty, but bright with sunshine and filled with the fragrance of flowers and the song of birds. And the people going to work in groups and crowds seemed to Petya to be different too, they walked more boldly, they looked cheerful and confident and in some way brighter and cleaner—probably because they had got rid of their clumsy winter clothes and many were already in light canvas jackets and coloured cotton shirts.

Coming home from school Petya felt very hot in his heavy uniform jacket and cap, which soon became quite wet on the inside.

Lessons finished a week before the exams. From morning to night Petya sat at the table under the mulberry tree, his fingers in his ears, learning events and dates, wagging his head like a Chinese mandarin. He had made up his mind to

get top marks in all the exams whatever happened, for he knew full well that no leniency would be shown him, he would be failed on any pretext. He got thin, and his hair, long uncut, straggled on his neck.

THE FIRST ISSUE OF THE "PRAVDA"

"Come to the station with me?" said Gavrik one day, appearing suddenly behind Petya.

Petya was so deep in his swotting that he did not even wonder why Gavrik was not at work. He only wagged his head a little faster and mumbled, "Let me alone."

Glancing up, however, he saw a very mysterious smile on Gavrik's face. Still more surprising was his carefully combed hair, the new cotton shirt held in by a new belt, the pressed trousers and the new boots which he wore only on very special occasions. All this must mean something unusual.

"Why the station?" Petya asked.

"To get the newspaper."

"What newspaper?"

"Our own. A daily. The workers' paper, lad. Sent straight from St. Petersburg by express. It's called the *Pravda."*

Petya had already heard talk of the new workers' paper the Beks would soon be putting out in St. Petersburg. Collections had been made for it among the workers, Petya had seen the money. Sometimes Terenty or Gavrik had brought it home from work and after counting it carefully, put it away in a tin box that had once held sweet drops. Once a week Terenty would send it away by post, and put the receipt in the same box.

The money was mostly in small coins, even in single kopeks. Ruble and three-ruble notes appeared but rarely, and it was difficult to imagine how such a big thing as a daily paper could possibly emerge from these coppers.

But now it seemed that it could, and it was coming on the St. Petersburg-Odessa express.

To be frank, Petya was already heartily sick of grinding away at his books all day and every day, from morning to night. He was glad of the excuse for a break. The idea of going to the station was enticing. It was a place that always attracted him. The network of rails spurred his imagination to picture the unknown regions to which their smoothly curving lines led.

The west Petya had already seen. But there was still the north, all its boundlessly vast expanses—Russia with Moscow, St. Petersburg, ancient Kiev, Arkhangelsk, the Volga, and Siberia which was Bo hard to picture, and finally the Lena River which was now not merely a river but an event in history, reeking with blood—like Khodynka (A place in Moscow where thousands of people were trampled to death in May 1896 during the coronation of Nicholas II due to the authorities' criminal negligence.—Tr.) or Tsushima. And it was from there, from the north, from the smoky, foggy St. Petersburg, that the express would today bring the newspaper Pravda.

When Petya and Gavrik arrived at the station, the train was already in and stood by the platform. It consisted entirely of shining Pullmans, blue or yellow, without a single third-class green coach. And there were two coaches such as neither Petya nor Gavrik had ever seen before; involuntarily the lads stopped before them.

They were faced with brightly polished wood, and the door handles, the corners of windows, the foreign letters of the inscription and the badge of the *Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits* were of brass that glittered in the sun. Even the outside conveyed a smart severity, like that of a ship.

When the boys, nudging one another, peeped in through a window with its narrow band of painted glass at the top, they gasped at the luxury inside, at the polished mahogany panels, the stamped-plush walls, the snow-white rumpled bedding, the electric-light bulbs like milky tulips, the blue net for light articles, the heavy bronze spittoon and the carpet on the floor.

In the other coach they saw something even more astounding—a buffet with bottles and hors-d'oeuvres, and a waiter in a tailcoat clearing pyramidal napkins from the tables, napkins so white and stiff that they might have been made of marble.

Even Petya who had been abroad had never imagined anything like this, let alone Gavrik.

"Oooh, just look!" Petya whispered, pressing his face so hard against the thick glass that his nose left a moist imprint.

Gavrik's eyes narrowed and with a queer smile he hissed through his teeth, "That's how our fine gentry travel."

"Keep off the coach, please!" said a stern voice with a foreign accent, and a conductor in the uniform jacket and cap of the *Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits* shoved the boys away with a firm hand as he passed.

Gavrik wrinkled his nose, doubled up his arm and thrust the elbow towards the man—in Near Mills an indication of the utmost mockery and contempt. But the conductor, from the height of his superiority, ignored the gesture, and the boys went on to the luggage coach.

At the moment flat cane baskets were being brought out; through the open nets covering them the lads could see fresh, moist flowers—Parma violets and roses, sent through St. Petersburg from Nice to Werkmeister's flower shop. Werkmeister himself, a gentleman in a short light bell-bottomed coat with mourning bands on the sleeve and on a top hat, was supervising the unloading, accompanying each basket the porter carried to the cart with a gentle touch from a finger bearing two wedding rings.

The boys could smell the perfume of damp flowers, strange among the coal and metal smells of the railway station, and this suddenly brought back to Petya that station in Naples, so like this one except for the palms and the agaves, and the forgotten girl with the black ribbon in her chestnut braid. And again he felt the bitter-sweet pang of parting. He even fancied that he saw her before him.

But at that moment Gavrik seized his sleeve and pulled him after a big truck loaded with piles of St. Petersburg newspapers and magazines. Two porters wheeled it with some difficulty, the small iron wheels striking sparks as they rumbled over the asphalt.

The boys ran alongside, trying to guess which pile contained the *Pravda.* The truck was wheeled off the platform into the station building and came to a

squealing stop beside a newspaper stall—a carved bookcase of fumed oak, big as an organ, with hundreds of books, newspapers and magazines lying .and hanging all over it.

Petya loved to look at all these novelties from St. Petersburg. The covers of love and detective novels excited him, so did the coloured caricatures of the *Satirikon,* and *Alarm-Ctock,* and the garlands of *The Leichtweiss Cave, Nat Pinkerton, Nick Carter,* and *Sherlock Holmes* series, that hung on lines like washing, with tiny pictures of these famous foreign detectives, with pipes or without, among whom the famous Russian detective Putilin looked very tnai've and provincial with his ministerial side-whiskers and his old-fashioned silk hat. Then there were the illustrated weekly journals—*The Spark, Sun of Russia, All the World, Round the World,* and especially that new magazine which had only just come out, the *Blue Journal,* which really was blue all through, smelt strongly of kerosene and stained the fingers.

All these dozens, hundreds, thousands of printed sheets promising a fantastic variety of ideas and subjects, but actually offering only an appalling emptiness, fascinated Petya, and he stood before them as though spellbound.

Meanwhile, the bundles of newspapers had been flung one after the other beneath the counter. The stout, long-bearded old man with a gold chain across his waistcoat, who rented the stall, kept putting a small pince-nez on his strawberry-coloured nose, leafing through his account book and jotting down notes with a pencil, while a very thin, bony lady in a hat, whose pointed angry face made her look like a pike, flung bundles of newspapers on the counter, from which they were quickly snatched up by news-boys and the owners of street stalls who had been queuing up for a long time.

"Fifty *New Times,* thirty *Country Life,* a hundred and fifty *Stock Exchange,* a hundred *Speech.* There you are, next!" she cried in a croaking voice, and in an instant the bundles were carried off on shoulders or heads across the station square. There they were pitched on to handcarts, wheelbarrows or cabs to be distributed over the whole city as fast as possible.

Gavrik took his place at the end of the queue with a little group of people who did not look like stall owners or news-boys. More than anything else they looked like workers. Gavrik greeted some of them and they exchanged a few quick words, impatiently eyeing the bundles of newspapers disappearing from the counter.

Petya had the feeling they were apprehensive about something.

At last their turn came.

"And what do you want?" asked the pike-faced lady, with a stern look at the strangers. She knew all her regular clients by sight but these she had never seen before. "What have you come for?"

"Our paper's the *Pravda."* An elderly worker with a clipped moustache wearing a Sunday jacket and tie but smelling strongly of varnish pushed forward to the counter. "We are from the Gena Factory, the Ropit Wharf, the repair workshops, the Weinstein Flour Mill, the Schawald Shipping Company and the Zur and Co. Furniture Factory. To begin with we want fifty copies apiece."

"What's that you say? *Pravda?* I've never heard of such a paper," said the lady in an artificial voice and turned to the old man. "Ivan Antonovich, does our agency handle the newspaper *Pravda?"*

"What's the matter?" asked the old man, and without raising his head from

his accounts shot a hostile look at the customers out of his small, piercing eyes.

"There's an application for three hundred copies of some *Pravda,"* said the lady.

"Not some *Pravda,"* Gavrik corrected her, "but the workers' daily paper which has its office at 37, Nikolayevskaya Street, St. Petersburg. Isn't it there?"

"It's not arrived," said the old man indifferently. "Come tomorrow."

"Excuse me," said an elderly worker, "but that's not possible. We've had a telegram."

"It's not arrived."

"Not arrived, hasn't it?" the elderly worker snapped, frowning. "The Black-Hundred *New Times* has come, the bourgeois *Speech* has come, but the workers' *Pravda* isn't here? Where's your lousy freedom, then?"

"For that sort of talk I could— Sofya Ivanovna, go quick for the gendarme!"

"What's that?" said the elderly worker very quietly, and his thick grey brows drew closer together. "Perhaps you want to send for the soldiers too? As they did on the Lena?"

"Don't waste your breath on them, Yegor Alexeyevich!" shouted a lad in a seaman's cap with blue tattooing on Ms sinewy arm—evidently from the Schawald Shipping Company. "Put him out!" He made a rush for the old man, pushing aside the pike-faced lady, whose hat went askew.

Petya shut his eyes. Now, he thought, something terrible will happen. But all he heard was the old man whining, "Don't touch me, I'll have the law on you...."

When he opened his eyes he saw Gavrik standing behind the counter, triumphantly pulling out a big package of the *Pravda* printed on cheap yellowish paper with the name in big, black letters, as straight and stern as the meaning of the word. *(Pravda—truth.—Tr.)*

"But mark this, gentlemen, we don't sell retail!" hissed the lady. "And don't expect credit. Either you take the whole consignment—a thousand copies, and pay on the spot, or you can get out and tomorrow your beggarly *Pravda* goes back to St. Petersburg, and the sooner it goes smash the better."

The paper was a cheap one, fitted for lean pockets. Other papers cost five kopeks, the *Pravda* only two. But even so, a thousand copies meant twenty rubles, a big sum in those days.

The six turned out their pockets but found that they could only scrape up sixteen rubles seventy-four kopeks.

"Ragamuffins, beggars, rabble, and want to push your noses into politics," rattled the lady all in one breath, turned her back and put her lace-mittened hand on the pile of papers.

"Just a minute," said the young fellow from the Schawald Shipping Company.

He raced into the first-class waiting-room, handed his silver watch over the refreshment counter and was back in a moment with a five-ruble note crumpled in his hand.

So ten minutes later Gavrik and Petya were marching towards Near Mills, each with a package of papers on his shoulder.

Although the newspaper was published legally, with the necessary permit, Petya felt like a law-breaker. Whenever the boys passed a policeman he felt the man was looking at them with great suspicion. As a matter of fact, he was often right.

It would have been hard not to notice two youths, one in school uniform and the other dressed as a workman, striding along very quickly, with sizeable bundles on their shoulders and obviously excited, the boy in school uniform looking round apprehensively at every step and the young workman whistling the "Varshavyanka" as loudly as he could, beating out the rhythm with his stride.

The nearer they came to their house, the faster the boys went until they were almost running. Sometimes Gavrik tossed his bundle in the air and, imitating newsboys, shouted, "New daily workers' paper, the *Pravda!* Latest news! All about the Lena massacre!" His eyes burned.

When they came to Sakhalinchik, quite close to Near Mills, Gavrik pulled out a number of copies and raced ahead at full speed, waving them over his head and shouting, "The Tsar's Minister Makarov tells the State Duma, 'What has been will be!' Down with the butcher Makarov! Long live the workers' *Pravda!* Buy the workers' *Pravda*\ Two kopeks a copy! What has been won't be!"

They came to the factory district and here Gavrik was quite at home. This was his own world, where he felt free and independent. Big gates with brass lettering on wire netting. Square brick buildings and tall chimneys. The squat concrete tower of the "Cocovar" margarine factory with its huge placard of a bulldog-faced chef offering a dish with a steaming pudding. The waterworks, the depot, the elevators.. ..

Here and there workers in blue shirts and greasy overalls came running out, drawn by Gavrik's cries. Some of them bought papers and handed coppers to Gavrik which he slipped into his mouth like a real news-boy.

Once a policeman noticed the disturbance and whistled, but Gavrik showed his elbow from the distance and the boys dived quickly down an alleyway.

Petya's fears had almost left him, it was as though they were playing some exciting, risky game.

Suddenly they heard the beat of running feet behind them. They turned. A man with his jacket open and flying was racing after them. He had bow legs and weaved from side to side, shouting, "Hi! You lads there! Stop!"

At first Petya thought he wanted to buy a paper and waited, but a second glance showed him his mistake. The man running after them held a short rubber truncheon and on his lapel was the badge of the Black-Hundred Union with its tricolour ribbon.

"Run!" shouted Gavrik.

But the man with the truncheon was there already; Petya felt a heavy blow which luckily missed his head and descended on the bundle of papers, just clipping his ear in passing.

Fragments of newsprint flew on all sides.

"Hands off!" Gavrik snarled, hoarse with rage; with his free hand he gave the man such a blow that he staggered back and almost fell. "Hands off, you blackguard! Murderer, bastard! I'll kill you!"

Without removing his eyes from the man, Gavrik slipped the bundle of papers from his shoulder and reached them back to Petya.

"Take those and run to the repair shops, call the workers' squad," he said rapidly, licking his lips and forgetting Petya might not know what workers' squads were.

But Petya knew. Hugging the papers, he raced along the narrow street at top speed.

Gavrik and the man faced each other on the road. Still licking his lips and breathing heavily through his nose, Gavrik slowly slid his right hand into his pocket. When he just as slowly took it out, it held a steel knuckleduster.

"I'll kill you!" he repeated, his hard eyes fixed on the man as though he wanted to fix in his mind that puffy dark face that looked as though it had been stung by bees, the little pig's eyes, the bullet-head with hair parted at the side and combed across the low forehead, and the crooked grin of a bully.

"Now then, you scum!" said the man and aimed a blow with his rubber truncheon; but Gavrik dodged it and raced after Petya.

He heard the beat of boots behind him, and when the sound came close Gavrik suddenly threw himself down on the ground; the man caught his foot, tripped and measured his length. Gavrik promptly sat down on him and started hammering the man's black head with his knuckle-duster, repeating fiercely, "Hands off! Hands off! Hands off!"

The man got his hand into his pocket with a groan and pulled out a small black Browning. A number of shots rang out, but Gavrik managed to get his foot on the man's arm and the bullets only struck harmless sparks from the cobbles.

"Help! Police!" sobbed the man and, twisting his head round, suddenly hit Gavrik on the leg.

Gavrik gasped and the next minute they were rolling over and over on the ground. It is hard to say how it would have ended, for Gavrik was much smaller and weaker than his opponent, but at that moment assistance came from the repair workshops.

Five men of the workers' squad armed with pieces of piping and spanners tore the Browning and the rubber truncheon out of the bully's hand, gave him a couple of buffets and all but carried Gavrik into the yard. It all happened so quickly that when a policeman came running up, drawn by the firing, he found nobody in the street except Gavrik's assailant sitting on the ground, slumped against the fence of the "Cocovar" margarine factory, spitting out blood-covered teeth.

From then on the new paper was sold regularly, first in the working-class districts and round the factories, and then here and there in the centre of the city.

THE COTTAGE IN THE STEPPE

A few days later exams began. It cost Motya and her mother a good deal of work to clean and mend Petya's uniform, for it had been in more than one adventure since its owner had come to live in Near Mills.

Petya's ear, which caught a glancing blow by the rubber truncheon, was no longer painful but was still blue and swollen, and in general presented a disreputable appearance. Petya hoped a dusting of tooth-powder would make it look a little more presentable and allowed Motya to do the powdering, which she did, passing a rag very gently and carefully over the injured ear, her tongue thrust out in concentrated effort.

Petya did not do at all badly in his exams, although the examiners tried hard to fail him.

The tense, tiring examination period, which as always coincided with the first May thunderstorms, thickly flowering lilacs, summer heat and short sleepless nights filled with moonlight and the whispers of lovers, thoroughly exhausted Petya. When he finally returned to Near Mills from the last exam—eyes sparkling, hair rumpled, hands covered with ink and chalk, perspiring and happy—it would have been hard to recognize him for the same boy he had been a couple of months before, so much older and thinner he looked.

The next day he shouldered his pillow and blanket and set off for home.

The first person he saw there was his father. Vasily Petrovich was weeding round the cherry trees, tearing out grass and chamomiles and tossing them into a basket. Petya looked at the kindly, unshaven face and the noticeably greyer hair, the dark-blue shirt, faded at the back and bleached almost white under the arms, the old trousers, baggy at the knees, the dusty sandals and the pince-nez that fell off and dangled on its cord every time his father bent down—and a flood of warmth filled him.

"Dad!" he called, "I'm through!"

His father turned and a happy smile lighted up the wet bearded face with a swollen vein running across the forehead.

"Ah, Petya! Well, congratulations, that's fine."

The boy dropped his pillow and blanket on the dusty grass and flung both arms round his father's hot, sunburned neck, noticing with surprise and a secret thrill of pride that they were almost the same height.

Auntie appeared from the flowering lilacs with the hoe in her hands. Petya

did not recognize her at once, for she had a kerchief fastened tightly round her head, making her look like a peasant woman.

"Auntie, I've passed them all!" Petya cried.

"I know, I heard you, congratulations," said Auntie, wiping her wet forehead with her arm. She beamed, but she could not refrain from improving the occasion. "Now you're in the seventh form, I hope you'll behave better."

Dunyasha, her head in a kerchief and a hoe in her hands like Auntie, also congratulated the young master on his success.

Then came a creaking of wheels followed by a big, bony, very old horse in funereal black blinkers pulling a long water-cart. The horse was led by the lanky youth, Gavrila, whom Petya had seen before, and Pavlik sat astride the barrel, barefoot and in a big straw hat, holding the reins and whip.

"Hey, Petya! Hullo!" he called, spitting to one side like a real carter. "Look, I can drive him a bit already! Here you, stop! Whoa!" he shouted at the horse, which at once stood motionless on its trembling legs, evidently glad to do so.

Gavrila set to work watering the trees, pouring a bucketful into the hollow dug round each. The dry earth absorbed the water instantaneously. In a few minutes Petya realized the work entailed in looking after an orchard.

Summer was beginning and there had not been a single really good rainfall. In the cistern the water was right down to the bottom. Now it had to be brought from the horse-tram terminus.

The orchard was in blossom and the trees were covered ,with ovaries that needed moisture all the time. It was a good thing that with the Vasyutinskaya orchard they had got that old horse, called Warden, and the water-cart. But a tremendous amount of water was needed, and Warden could barely crawl.

From morning to night there was the creaking of un-greased wheels from the water-cart, the crack of the whip .and the heavy breathing of the bony black nag that looked ready to fall down and give up the ghost at any moment. It was hard to make him rise from his wet straw in the morning. He trembled all over, weakly shifting his great cracked hoofs, and the flies crawled round his blind, watering eyes.

This somewhat dashed their spirits, and at times seemed like a bad omen. But the weather was wonderful and the crop promised to be so rich that the Bachei family, busy from morning to night with their unaccustomed but enjoyable physical work, felt splendid.

At first Petya thought he never would learn to dig round the trees. The heavy spade twisted awkwardly in his hands and seemed too blunt to cut deeply into the ground with its thick growth of grass and chamomiles. His hands smarted and he rubbed blisters on the palms. But by the time they had burst and turned into calluses, he began to understand the way of it.

It seemed that the spade should be put down at an angle, and he should press not only with his hands but also, and mainly, with his foot—slowly and evenly; there was a crack of tearing roots and the spade went down into the black soil right to the very top. Then came the blissful moment when he bore down with all his weight on the handle, felt it bend a little, and with a pleasant effort turned over the heavy layer of soil with its imprint of the spade and half a wriggling red worm.

At first Petya worked in sandals, but then began digging barefoot to save them, and the contact of his skin with the warm iron was another thing he

enjoyed. He ^realized that this was not play, it was work, the future of the family depended on it.

All of them worked in the sweat of their brows, it was a real struggle for existence. They had dinner at midday on the big glassed-in veranda, hot from the sunshine. They ate *borshch,* boiled beef, and grey wheaten bread which they bought from the German settlers at> Lustdorf. They were so tired they ate almost in silence, and what talk there was concerned only the weather, rain and the crop.

Although they were living in a summer cottage they were quite unlike the usual holiday crowd. They slept on folding beds in the big, comfortless rooms, with spades, hoes, buckets, watering-cans and other implements lying about in the corners. They washed at dawn by the water-cart, and although the sea was not far away, only about a mile and a half, they seldom went bathing— there was no time.

Vasily Petrovich became thin and haggard; he was evidently overtaxing his strength but he refused to slacken off, and worked so hard that Petya often worried about him.

Everything appeared to be going well. It was the kind of life Vasily Petrovich had often dreamed of in secret, especially after his European tour—with something of Switzerland, something of the Rousseau spirit, a life independent of the government or society. A little plot of land, an orchard, a vineyard, healthy physical toil and leisure devoted to reading, walking, philosophical conversation and all the rest of it.

So far, it is true, there had been only the healthy physical toil, no time was left for the leisure devoted to spiritual joys. But after all, that was natural, the new life was only just beginning.

Nevertheless, Vasily Petrovich was never free from a nagging sense of worry. He was uneasy about the crop.

The ovaries stood thick on the cherry trees, fine, green balls that swelled day by day, but who could say how they would go on? Suppose there was no rain, the water carried proved insufficient and the crop was lost? And even if it was not lost, how were they to sell it?

Up to now the question of selling the crop had never been properly discussed, it had been somehow taken for granted. People would come, wholesale dealers from the market, and buy up the whole of it. All right. But what if they didn't come and didn't buy it?

Meanwhile, the date for the second payment on the note of hand was drawing near, and two postcards had come from abroad, with a reminder from the old woman and a warning that if the payment was not made punctually she would at once protest the bill, close the agreement and let the farm to other tenants.

This took all peace of mind from Vasily Petrovich and he began to lose his temper about trifles.

Auntie remained cheerful, she made various plans and fastened a sheet of paper to a telegraph post by the horse-tram terminus announcing a comfortable cottage of two completely isolated rooms to let in a delightful spot on the steppe not far from the sea, with an orchard and vineyard; it could be rented either for the season or by the month. Full service if required.

These two separate rooms were nothing more nor less than the tiny neglected hut roofed with shingles where Madame Vasyutinskaya's servants had once

lived. It stood by itself, its windows facing the steppe, amid a thick growth of silvery wormwood; to Petya, who had explored the whole place, it was a wonderful, mysterious, and very romantic spot.

However, people who read the notice and came to take a look were not impressed. One and all said the same thing, "You call it 'not far from the sea'?"

Gavrik came a number of times to study Latin. He liked the farm, but he still had no use for all this business of physical toil and the sweat-of-your-brow, he looked upon it as an eccentric whim. He did not say so straight out, however. On the contrary, he asked very seriously about watering, hoeing, crop prospects and the wholesale price of cherries. He gave no advice, only shook his head in concern and sighed so sympathetically that Petya even began to have qualms about the success of their venture.

Gavrik said little about his work in the print-shop and life in Near Mills, he seemed reluctant to discuss it, but from the little he did say Petya concluded that things were not going very smoothly. After the big May Day demonstration which he had hardly noticed in his absorption in exams, the police had got busy again, there had been house searches and some people had been arrested; the police had been to the Chernoivanenkos', too, but had found nothing and Terenty was not arrested.

"In general, it's hard to work," said Gavrik, and Petya was in no doubt about the sense in which he used the word "work."

On one of his visits, as though continuing that topic, Gavrik said suddenly, "About renting out that cottage of yours—it's not such a bad idea."

"Yes, but nobody wants it," said Petya.

"If you look properly you may find someone," Gavrik answered, as though he had thought it all over. "There are people for whom a place like that would be just the very thing. Not everyone likes to take a room in town, where you have to hand in your papers for registration the moment you move in. Get me?" he ended sternly, looking very straight at Petya.

"I get you all right," Petya answered with a shrug.

"Well then, remember," said Gavrik still more sternly. "The point is," he went on more gently, almost casually, "I know a widow with a child, an assistant doctor, she's from another town and she wants a room where it's quiet. Of course, we could fix her up in our shed, but in Near Mills conditions aren't all we want—you understand? Such a watch kept, it's no use trying. The widow's got all her. papers in order, you've no need to worry about that."

"I understand," said Petya.

"Well, I needn't explain any more, then. Terenty told me to sound you out about it. I've never seen her myself. But I'm sure she'll be all right with you. A quiet place, like a farm really, neither town nor village, and plenty of summer cottages all round. Who'll ever notice her? Couldn't find anything better. Now the next question— what's the rent?"

"I believe it's seventy rubles for the season."

"Eh, lad, that's opening your mouth a bit too wide! You'll get nothing that way. Fifteen rubles a month's a good fair price. She can pay two months in advance. But what's the sense of talking to you about it? I'll go to your aunt."

Gavrik did talk to Auntie and soon convinced her that it would be better to have a real, concrete thirty rubles—which weren't to be picked up on the ground— rather than an imaginary seventy. As for the widow and her child,

Gavrik said nothing about her but made it clear that he had specially sought out a suitable tenant for them and was thus doing the Bachei family a very good turn—although he made no actual promises.

The rain did not come. The drought continued and the heat was suffocating.

THE DEATH OF WARDEN

arden was fed freshly cut hay instead of oats to save money, and fell sick with a stomach disorder; for the fourth day he lay with distended belly on his straw, too weak even to raise himself on his forefeet, let alone pull the water-cart. The German vet came from Lustdorf, examined the horse and looked into his gaping mouth. To Auntie's question whether he would be able to pull the cart again, the vet answered, "That horse has done all his pulling. Time to send him to the knacker's."

The ovaries on the trees ceased to swell; they looked as if they would never grow any bigger, but remain as they were, the size of peas. And most dreadful of all, some of them turned yellow and dropped off.

The Bacheis continued earthing up trees from morning to night, although they felt it was useless labour.

"Auntie, Daddy, Petya, come quick, the Persians are here!" cried Pavlik, racing up to them under the low boughs of the trees, waving his straw hat.

In reality these were not Persians at all, they were two powerfully-built Jews in dark-blue belted shirts hung to their knees and tall sheepskin hats pulled low over their brows—dealers who bought fruit wholesale, and were called Persians because in the old days Persians had done all this type of fruit-trading in Odessa.

Petya saw two men standing by the dry water barrel with faces expressionless as those of carved idols. He gazed at them as at the arbiters of fate, with fear and hope. Even at the exams he had been less agitated.

The whole Bachei family surrounded the Persians.

One of them addressed Auntie.

"Are you the mistress here?" he asked in a low rumbling voice that seemed to issue from his stomach. "We'll take a look at your crop, maybe we'll buy it on the tree—if there's anything left of it."

Without waiting for an answer, both Persians walked along the overgrown paths, glancing carelessly at the trees and now and then stopping to touch an ovary or feel the soil round the roots.

The Bacheis followed them in silence, trying to guess their thoughts. Although the men's faces remained expressionless, it was plain that the situation was really bad. When they had finished their examination, the Persians brought their sheepskin hats close together and whispered for a moment.

"They need water," said one, addressing Auntie; they whispered again and walked silently away.

"Well?" asked Auntie, following them with tiny steps and overtaking them at

the gate.

"They need water," the man repeated, halting, and after a moment's thought he added, "fruit like that we wouldn't take even as a gift."

"Come now, you're exaggerating," said Auntie with a kind of forced coquettishness, trying to turn it into a joke, "Let's be serious."

"Well, we'll give you twelve rubles for the whole crop as it stands, take it or leave it," the man answered and pushed his hat lower over his brows.

Auntie flushed with indignation. Such an absurd sum as twelve rubles was an insult. She could hardly believe her ears.

"What's that? How much did you say?"

"Twelve rubles," the man repeated roughly.

"Vasily Petrovich, you hear what they're offering?" cried Auntie, clasping her hands and forcing a laugh.

"What's wrong with that? It's a good price," said the Persian. "Better take it while you can get it, in another week you won't get five, you'll just have blistered your hands for nothing."

"Boor!" said Auntie.

"Sirs, will you kindly get out of here!" cried Vasily Petrovich, and his jaw shook. "Outside! Out, I say! Gavrila, put them out, throw them out! Robbers!" And Vasily Petrovich stamped his foot.

"No need for abuse," said the Persian quite pacifically. "First learn to look after your fruit, then it'll be time enough to shout."

So the men left, not forgetting to shut the gate behind them.

"Just think, the impudence of it!" Auntie kept repeating. She dropped her spade and fanned herself with her handkerchief.

"Now, don't you go getting upset about it, ma'am," said Gavrila. "Just take no notice. They only came to push down the price. I know their sort. But what they said about water, that's right. Our orchard has to have it. The trees want water. No water, no crop. And there you are, the horse is down. No way to bring it. If only it would rain now. Water—you can't do without it."

Scant comfort in that.

They tried to hire a horse from the German settlers in Lustdorf, but nothing came of it: first the Germans named an impossibly high price, and then refused point-blank, saying they needed their horses themselves. The real fact was that they all had their own orchards and the ruin of a competitor just suited them.

"Amazing, how unneighbourly they are!" cried Auntie at dinner-time, cracking her fingers, a thing she had never done before.

"What's to be done, what's to be done," mumbled Vasily Petrovich, bending a little too low over his plate. *"Homo homini lupus est,* which means 'Man's a wolf to man'.... If you remember, I told you at the time this stupid idea of trading in fruit would end badly." His ears turned red as a cock's comb.

He had said it would end badly—he could well have said it would end in complete ruin. It was clear without words. Auntie turned pale with the pain of hearing these cruel, unjust words. Her eyes filled with tears and her lips trembled.

"Vasily Petrovich, aren't you ashamed," she said imploringly, her fingers at her temples.

"Why should I be ashamed? It's all your fantastic idea ... your crazy idea...."

Vasily Petrovich could no longer stop, he had lost all control of himself. He

jumped up and suddenly saw Pavlik apparently holding his nose so as not to giggle; actually the boy was biting his fingers desperately to keep himself from crying.

"What!" yelled Vasily Petrovich in a voice not his own. "You have the impudence to laugh! I'll teach you to respect your father! Stand up, you rascal, when your father speaks to you!"

"Dad—Daddy!" sobbed Pavlik, and clapped his hands over his face in terror.

But Vasily Petrovich was beyond understanding. He picked up his plate of soup and smashed it down on the floor. Then he twisted his arm round awkwardly, gave Pavlik a buffet on the back of the neck and rushed out into the orchard, slamming the door behind him with such violence that the coloured glass at the top fell in shattered fragments.

"I can't live in this madhouse any longer!" Petya suddenly screamed. "Damn you! I'm going to Near Mills and I'm not coming back!" He ran into his room to put his things together.

Altogether, it was a shameful, degrading scene. One might have thought they had all lost their senses, gone mad as dogs do in the heat.

The heat certainly was dreadful—close, exhausting, dry, burning—enough to drive anybody mad. The pale sky seemed to have a dull, scorching veil drawn over it. Waves of heat came from the steppe as they come from the open door of an oven. Hot winds carried clouds of dust. The acacias rustled with a dry, papery sound and the grass was grey. The strip of sea on the horizon looked brown, speckled with greyish-white foam; and whenever the roar of the wind died down one could hear the sound of waves—dry and monotonous like the distant rattle of pebbles thrown on to some huge sieve.

The dusty shadows of trees flickered on the walls and ceilings of rooms. A terrible day.... Not only Petya but Vasily Petrovich, Auntie and even Pavlik were ready to collect their belongings and run away—anywhere, to get away from the sight of one another and the mutual sense of injury. But of course nobody did run away, they only wandered aimlessly about in the hot rooms and along the rustling paths. They felt fettered to this wretched place which had at first looked like heaven on earth.

Towards evening a figure appeared in the orchard—a short, stout man in a tall sheepskin hat, but brown this time instead of black. This was another Persian, a real one this time, with long eastern moustaches and languorous eyes. He went quickly round the orchard leaning ion a short stick, and then stood beside the kitchen waiting for somebody to come out. As no one appeared, however, he went to the house and rapped on the window with his stick.

When Auntie peeped out, he said, "Hi, Mistress!" and pointed at the orchard with a yellow hand adorned with dirty nails. "I'll buy your crop for five rubles. Better take it or you'll be sorry later."

"Ruffian!" cried Auntie in a dreadful voice. "Gavrila, what are you about? Throw him out!"

But the real Persian did not wait for Gavrila, he ran off with small limping steps and disappeared in an instant.

Then came the third postcard from Madame Vasyutinskaya, reminding them of the date for the next payment.

Nobody wanted any supper that day, and for a long time the four soup-plates of yoghurt sprinkled with sugar stood untouched on the table on the veranda.

In the middle of the night a dreadful, inhuman, bloodcurdling cry awakened everybody. What could it be? Outside the windows the black outlines of the fruit trees swayed as in fever. Then the cry was repeated, still more dreadful, with a kind of screaming, sobbing laugh in it. Somebody came running along the path, waving a lantern. Then there was a battering on the glazed door that shook the house. Gavrila stood on the step, waving his lantern.

"Come quick, ma'am, Warden's dying," he cried in a frightened voice.

Petya flung something on and raced to the stable, trembling from head to foot. Auntie, Vasily Petrovich, Dunyasha and Pavlik, barefoot and wrapped in a blanket, stood huddled round the door.

Gavrila's lantern shed an ominous light inside the stable. He could hear the deep, vibrating groans of the dying horse. They stood petrified, helpless, unable to think of any way to stave off this catastrophe.

Just before dawn the horse gave one last dreadful scream vibrant with pain and terror, and then fell silent for ever. In the morning a cart arrived and he was taken out somewhere far away on the steppe—huge, bony, black, with bared teeth and long outstretched legs ending in cracked hoofs and shining, worn iron shoes.

THE WIDOW WITH A CHILD

They were all so crushed by this disaster that nobody did any work all day. The death of Warden was not only a bad omen, it was the final blow to all their hopes, it meant inevitable ruin for the family. Utter despair reigned.

After dinner the wind died down somewhat but the sultry heat was worse than ever. Not a cloud could be seen in the pale, dusty-looking sky. A band of lilac lay along the horizon, a deceptive reflection of distant thunderstorms that constantly gathered but never broke. This was not the first time there had been a promise of storm, but it had always been followed by disappointment, either the cloud had melted away imperceptibly in the scorching air or it had passed by and broken somewhere out to sea, with a useless rolling of thunder echoing over the steppe.

Today it was the same. The storm broke far away. Nobody was surprised, they had already lost all hope of rain, although that was the only chance left for the crop. Petya was weary after a sleepless night; he did not know what to do with himself and wandered out on the steppe, roaming aimlessly until a big circuit brought him to the sea. He climbed down the cliff, clutching at roots and boulders, and finally sat down on the hot pebbles.

The water was still heaving after the storm of the previous day, but the waves, heavy with seaweed, no longer beat angrily against the beach but rolled smoothly up it, leaving stranded jelly-fish and dead sea-horses.

It was a wild, deserted strip of coast, and Petya, who had all day longed to be alone, felt easier there, lapped in a quiet melancholy. It was a long time since he had bathed and now he undressed quickly and slipped with pleasure into the warm, foamy water.

There was a special, inexplicable delight in this bathe which he took quite alone. First he swam along the shore for a little way among slippery rocks washed by the sea and covered with brown weeds, then he turned out to sea. As usual, he swam on his side, kicking his legs like a frog and flinging one hand forward in a broad overarm swing. He pushed his shoulder through the waves, trying to raise that splash which made him feel he was cutting swiftly through the water although in reality his speed was nothing wonderful. He was very pleased with himself. He particularly liked that shoulder which pushed through the water—brown, smooth as silk under a gleaming wet film that reflected the sunshine.

The time had long passed when he had been afraid to go far from the shore. He would strike out boldly for the open sea and then turn over on his back, let the waves rock him, and stare up at the sky until he had the feeling that he was looking down at it, hanging, void of weight, in space. The whole world vanished, he forgot everything but himself, alone and all-powerful.

Now too, he swam out about a mile, turned over... and gasped at the change that had taken place around him. The sky overhead was still clear and the sea shone with a hot, blinding glare, but it had a hard glitter, like the glitter of anthracite.

Petya looked back to the shore. Over the narrow strip of cliff, over the steppe hung something huge, black, surging and—most terrible of all—quite silent. Before Petya had time to realize that this was a thundercloud it rolled up to the sun, which was blindingly white like a magnesium flare, and swallowed it up in an instant, extinguishing all colours from the world so that everything became a leaden grey.

Petya swam back as fast as he could, and anyway he could, trying to get ashore before the storm burst. Far away on the steppe, under the slaty sky, he could see whirling dust-devils chasing one another. And when he climbed up the beach and turned to look at the sea, the place where he had only just been was already a seething mass of foam whipped by a squall, with sea-gulls flying wildly over.

Petya barely managed to catch his trousers and shirt as they fled with the wind along the beach. While he was climbing the cliff everything turned as dark as late evening. He raced at top speed to the horse-tram terminus where rails were being laid for electric trams and concrete poured for a new building. Just as he got there lightning flashed, there was a great bang of thunder and in the hush that followed he could hear the roar of the approaching downpour.

Petya ran on to the road, and as though some gate had opened, a sharp scent of wet hemp struck him, followed by a solid wall of rain.

In an instant the road became a river. The lightning flashes showed him the foaming torrent that swirled round his legs. His feet 'slipped. There was no sense trying to get home through that. Up to the knees in water he made his way back to the tram-shelter, crossing himself every time the lightning flashed close by with an almost simultaneous clap of thunder. It was only as he slipped down into a deep gutter that Petya suddenly realized this was the thunderstorm, the downpour, for which the whole Bachei family had waited so desperately. It was not ordinary water, it was the water which would soak the orchard, fill the empty cistern and save them from ruin.

"Hurrah!" shouted Petya and ran through the storm to the farm, no longer afraid of anything.

He slipped and fell several times on the way, flopping full length in the mud, but now this warm mud felt wonderful. When he reached home the sunset showed dimly through a break in the main-clouds and the storm rolled away out to sea where lightning flashed convulsively and thunder snarled on a dark-blue horizon. But Petya had hardly time to race along the paths and admire the muddy water filling the hollows round the trees, to plant a happy kiss on his father's wet beard, to give Pavlik a friendly buffet and shout, "Grand, Auntie, isn't it?" before the storm came back, more violent than ever.

Several times after that it circled over the sea and returned again. The rain continued all through the night, sometimes pouring in torrents, sometimes stealthily quiet, barely audible, while under the trees thousands of tiny streams glittered in the lightning flashes which illumined the orchard with all its distant, mysterious corners.

The whole night Gavrila, a sack over his head, ran round the house and over

the roof fixing up the pipes that collected the water and poured it in rapid torrents into the cistern. And to the noise of the filling cistern Petya fell into a deep, happy sleep.

It was late when he awakened. A rosy sun shone like a jewel through the warm mist, and the wet garden was full of bird-song. Auntie looked in through the open window.

"Get up, lazy-bones!" she called gaily. "While you've been asleep, our tenants have come!"

"The widow with a child?" asked Petya yawning.

"The very same," Auntie answered with the mischievous smile that showed her spirits were excellent. "There's tea ready, come along."

Of course, Petya wanted to see the widow and child, so he hurried to the veranda.

He halted, thunderstruck.

Sitting at the table between Vasily Petrovich and Pavlik, calmly drinking tea, were that same lady and that same girl he had seen the previous year at the station in Naples.

He gave his head a shake as though a cinder had flown into his eye again.

"Ah, here's our Petya, let me introduce him," said Auntie with her society smile.

Petya almost burst out with "We know each other already," but something held him back. Blushing, he went round the table, clicked his heels politely and waited for the lady to extend her hand first, as a well-bred boy should. After clasping the cool, slender fingers of the mother, Petya looked with secret hope at the daughter, asking with his eyes whether she did not remember him.

But the girl only looked surprised at Petya's queer expression and held out her little hand indifferently, saying, "Marina." That was quite unexpected, for in accordance with character portrayal by Pushkin and Goncharov, Petya had always thought of her as Tanya or Vera. And now she turned out to be Marina. Petya eyed her with frank reproach, as though she had deceived him.

She looked just the same as she had in Naples, with the same short summer coat, the same black hair-ribbon and the same little jutting chin that gave her pretty face with its rather high cheek-bones a lofty, unapproachable expression. Her hazel eyes were cold and disapproving as though asking, "What do you want of me?"

"Frailty, thy name is woman," thought Petya bitterly, and then with still greater bitterness realized that she had not forgotten him, she had never even noticed him.

Petya felt insulted, his pride had suffered a blow.

"In that case, all is over between us," he said with his eyes, and with a cold, indifferent shrug he turned and went to his place.

"Stop making faces," said Auntie.

"I'm not making faces," Petya answered, and straightaway stuffed soft bread in his tea to make a "pudding." The way of making it was this: you put pieces of soft bread in a half-filled glass of tea, then when the bread swelled you turned the glass upside down on the saucer, producing something which by a great stretch of imagination resembled a pudding. This was considered bad manners in the Bachei family, so Vasily Petrovich gave Petya a very stern look through his glasses and tapped the table with his index finger.

"I shall send you away!"

"Please, don't think he doesn't know how to behave, he's just shy," said Auntie, addressing the mother but with a sly glance at the daughter—which made Petya snort and start messing the "pudding" up with his teaspoon.

Marina's mother, however, was disinclined to keep the polite conversation going. She evidently found no pleasure in this ceremonial tea-drinking with strangers, people who happened to be letting her rooms but who otherwise did not interest her in the least.

She was a brunette with a small, jutting chin like her daughter's, a dark shadow on her upper lip, a shabby widow's bonnet and wary eyes.

"About the rent," she said, continuing the talk which Petya's entrance had interrupted. "I was told that it's fifteen rubles a month. That suits me very well and I'd like to pay two months in advance, thirty rubles." She opened a black bag like the ones midwives carry and took out some notes. "We shan't want board, we've a kerosene stove and we'll manage for ourselves. Here is the money, exactly thirty rubles."

"Oh, that's quite all right," mumbled Auntie, flushing and embarrassed as she always was when money was discussed. "You don't need to give it me now ... later would do.... Well, *merci,* then." She pushed the money which had a slight hospital smell carelessly under the sugar-bowl.

Marina's mother put her hand in her bag again as though seeking something else (her papers, thought Petya), but evidently changed her mind, took her hand out and snapped the bag to with a decisive click.

"And now if you don't mind, I'd like to go to our rooms," she said.

Refusing assistance, mother and daughter picked up their belongings—an oilcloth satchel, a kerosene stove wrapped in newspaper, a bag and an umbrella—and crossed the garden to the cottage, leaving deep imprints on the wet paths.

"A rather strange woman," observed Vasily Petrovich. "But after all, what's that got to do with us?"

"In any case, she seems quite cultured," said Auntie with a sigh, took the money out from under the sugar-bowl and slipped it into the pocket of her smart apron.

For a little while the weather cleared, and the garden sparkled in the hot sunshine. But hardly had the Bacheis picked up their spades and gone out to start work when the clouds gathered again and the rain recommenced, but this time a warm, gentle rain, just the kind needed to ensure a good crop. It went on with short breaks for a whole week, and in that week the garden was literally transformed.

The ovaries swelled before their eyes, promising excellent fruit. The trees seemed to be thick with cherries—still green, it is true, but getting ready to change colour. With all this a spirit of gaiety, hope and affection reigned among the Bacheis, and nobody noticed the change in Petya.

THE SECRET NOTE

For some time the boy had been in a constant state of subdued excitement. A tense half-smile kept flitting over his face. He did not know what to do with himself, especially as all the trees were already earthed up and well watered by the rain, so that there was no work to keep him occupied. Petya's heart and mind were concentrated on one aim —to see Marina. Simple enough, one might think. She was living right beside him. They had been introduced. They could see each other a dozen times a day. But it was not like that at all.

The Pavlovskayas (that was their name) never left their rooms, never appeared in the garden. Evidently they avoided society—or to put it plainly, they were in hiding. Petya understood that well enough, but it made matters no easier for him.

For a whole week he saw Marina only once, and that was at a distance. She was returning from the terminus, waist-deep in wheat, holding up a big black umbrella and carrying a tin can—evidently for kerosene.

Petya raced home, put on his cape and started walking up and down by the gate with a most casual, indifferent air. But Marina took the path through the fields and Petya only caught a glimpse of her closing the umbrella and disappearing into the cottage.

Petya roamed about the orchard a long time in the rain, choosing the parts that gave him a view of the cottage, but the girl did not appear again.

Late that evening, when darkness fell, Petya—holding his breath and inwardly despising himself—crept up to the cottage and crouched down in the thick wormwood that showered him from head to foot with the aromatic rain-water from its leaves.

One of the windows was dark but the other was pale with candlelight. Looking in, Petya saw Marina's bent head and her moving hand as she wrote earnestly; the light gave her fingers the faintly transparent look of porcelain. Behind her the large shadow of Madame Pavlovskaya moved up and down the whitewashed wall raising and lowing an open book—from which he could conclude that Marina was writing dictation.

This sobered Petya a little, it even brought a scornful smile.

At that moment the girl's hand halted in indecision. Marina sought counsel on the ceiling. Petya could see her jutting chin, frowning brow and narrowed eyes; on one of them she had a sty coming. As she gazed in puzzlement at the ceiling she licked her lips once or twice, and such a sudden wave of emotion shook Petya that he shut his eyes. *No,* never in all his life had he loved anyone as he loved this dark-haired girl with the independent, jutting chin and the sty coming on her eye.

He had loved her for a long time, a year already. But before this she had been a dream, a phantasy. He had almost ceased to believe in her existence.-He had forgotten her to such an extent that sometimes he could not even picture her. It had not really been love, only a premonition of love, mingled with the blizzard in the mountains, the black swans round Rousseau's island, the sulphurous smoke of Vesuvius, the vague imaginary picture of Paris, the magic words "Longjumeau" and "Marie Rose"—in short, everything which a year before had captured his imagination and wrung his heart.

Now it was an ordinary, everyday love, alluring in its very accessibility. Marina was no longer loftily unapproachable, there was no more mystery about her. Just an ordinary girl, not even especially pretty, with a sty on her eye, writing dictation. Tomorrow she would go out for a walk in the garden and he would go up and talk to her. They would talk for a long time and then they would never part again.

Petya went home to bed and fell asleep in the blissful certainty that on the morrow a new, delightful life was going to begin. He could even see himself as Yevgeny Onegin and her as Tatyana, anticipating the secret rendezvous at which he would at first "instruct the lady of his heart" and then say he'd been joking and take her arm.

But nothing of the kind happened.

Marina still did not appear, and Petya reproached her inwardly, even called her a fair deceiver, as though she had made him some promise. Then he resolved to chastise her by indifference, to take no more notice of her. For a whole day he kept his eyes away from their windows. Of course it was very cruel, but it had to be done. Let her realize what he was capable of if he were deceived. She had only herself to blame.

The next day Petya decided to let wrath give way to kindness, for, after all, he loved her. Again he began eyeing the cottage from afar. But it was all no good, she did not appear.

After that he so far lost the mastery over himself as to risk going up quite close a number of times. He noticed that a new path had been beaten from the door, leading out into the steppe. Aha, so that was why she never appeared in the garden! She preferred wandering over the steppe. And what if that narrow path were nothing other than a hint, an invitation to a secret rendezvous? Heavens above, how had he failed to understand! Why, it was clear as daylight! So he began roaming about the steppe, glancing impatiently at the cottage. At any moment she would see him and come out. He would be tender, but firm.

The only fly in the ointment was that the weather had turned hot again, too hot for his cape.

But alas!—she still stayed inside. It seemed as if she were deliberately mocking him.

"You wait," thought Petya. "Your kerosene will come to an end, then we'll see!"

As though to taunt him, the weather was wonderful. The lilacs were over, but white acacia and jasmine were in full bloom, filling the air with their sweet, languorous fragrance. At night the added scent of night violets and flowering tobacco made the air still more intoxicating, their pale stars vaguely visible in the twilight on the luxuriant flower-beds in front of the house.

In the evening a great golden moon rose over the sea, and by midnight it

hung over the steppe, bathing everything in a warm, jasmine light.

Could anything be more romantic? And all of it wasted!

Weary of idleness and love, Petya could neither sleep nor eat. He became thin and haggard and his eyes had a restless glitter.

"What's the matter, fallen in love?" asked Auntie, looking at him with curiosity.

Petya wanted to wither her with a glance, but all he managed was such a pitiful travesty of a smile that she shrugged her shoulders.

The end of it all was that Petya decided to write a diary. He found an old exercise book, tore out some pages with algebra problems and wrote, "Love has come to me...." He had expected it would be perfectly easy to fill the whole book with a detailed description of his emotions, which he felt to be so extraordinary and so vast. But try as he would, he could find -nothing more to add, such was the surging confusion of his mind.

Then he turned desperately to the last resort—to write her a letter and appoint a rendezvous.

Of course, there was nothing so very extraordinary about that. But Petya's condition had reached the stage where the object of one's love seems a being of a loftier sphere, an ideal far above ordinary human relations, even though she does go to buy kerosene with an umbrella over her head, or even writes dictation.

However, there was nothing else left to do.

For love-letters it was common to use what were called "secret notes," very popular in the "flying post," game played at parties. These were small pieces of coloured paper with perforated glued edges, which could be doubled and sealed, serving as notepaper and envelope. To open them one tore off the perforated part. They came under the same category as confetti, serpentines, silken masks and other ball-room trifles. These were the proper medium for tender messages. But Petya had none, and there was nowhere to buy them. The best he could do was to fold a sheet of paper torn from an exercise book and himself make pin-holes along its loose edges.

This took some effort, but to write the note itself was still worse. Petya wrote five rough copies before he achieved the following:

"Marina!! I must speak to you about *something very important.* Come out to the steppe tomorrow at exactly eight in the evening. I do not sign this, for I hope you can guess the sender." Petya heavily underlined the words *"something very important,"* secretly relying on feminine curiosity.

He went into the orchard and scratched some resin from a cherry tree. With considerable satisfaction he chewed it soft, stuck the note together with it and wrote on the outside, "To Marina. Personal and private."

Petya slipped the note into his pocket and went straight off to look for Pavlik. He found him in the stable. And found him playing cards with Gavrila. At the moment of Petya's appearance he was kneeling with raised hand, preparing to slam down the ace of hearts with all the force of which he was capable on a rubbed, worn knave that lay on the ground beside the pack, surrounded by crawling insects and piles of small coins.

Pavlik's face was filled with reckless excitement, but Gavrila, kneeling opposite, looked downcast, and drops of sweat ran down his long freckled nose.

"Aha," thought Petya, "so this is how my fine brother spends the day, this is what idleness can lead to!"

"Pavlik, come here!" he said sternly.

Pavlik jumped as though stung, and with a quick, agile movement twisted round and sat on the pack, looking at his brother with innocent brown eyes.

"Come here!" Petya repeated with increased sternness.

"Now don't take it wrong, young master," said Gavrila, forcing a laugh. "We're not gambling, we're just fooling about to pass the time, like. May I die here on the spot if we're not!"

"Tell-tale-tit!" chanted Pavlik, just in case, inconspicuously scraping out the money from under him.

Petya, however, only frowned and shrugged his shoulders.

"That's not what I'm after," he said. "Come here."

He led Pavlik away into the bushes, halted with legs astride and bent a stern look on him.

"It's this—" He stopped, at a loss for a moment. "I want you to do something for me ... or rather, not to do something, to go on an errand."

"I know, I know," said Pavlik quickly.

"What do you know?" asked Petya, frowning.

"I know what you want. You want me to take a note to that new girl. Isn't that it?"

"How did you guess?" cried the startled Petya.

"Huh!" Pavlik answered scornfully. "D'you think I can't see the silly way you're going on? But you needn't try to get me to take your notes 'cause I won't!"

"Oh yes, you will," said Petya menacingly.

"Think you're somebody, don't you!" said Pavlik boldly, but retreating a step to be on the safe side.

"You will go!" Petya hissed obstinately.

"No I won't."

"Yes you will!"

"No I won't, and you can stop ordering me about, too. I'm not a kid to run after girls with your notes. Go there and have Madame Pavlovskaya pull my ears, eh? I'm not such a fool!"

"So you won't go, won't you?" asked Petya with an ominous smile.

"No I won't!"

"All right, so much the worse for you!"

"And what'll happen?"

"Simply that I'll go right away and tell Father you're gambling."

"And I'll go right away and tell everyone you're in love with the new girl and you're writing her sloppy notes and you sit in the weeds under her window and stop her learning her lessons and everybody'll laugh at you. Aha, got you!"

"You little worm," said Petya.

"You're another."

"All the same, you'd better hold your tongue," said Petya dully.

"I'll hold mine if you hold yours."

With those words Pavlik strutted back to the stable where Gavrila, bored with nothing to do, was lying en the ground shuffling the cards.

No hope there.

That night Petya again crept to the cottage and sat among the wormwood for a long time, plucking up courage to toss the note in through the open window. This time the whole house was dark, evidently both were asleep. Petya even

thought he could hear deep breathing. The moon shone so brightly on the whitewashed walls that they looked blue, patterned by the swaying shadows of acacias, while the wormwood in which Petya sat gleamed silver.

Several times Petya had to change his position, seeking shadows that would hide him from the moonlight, and finally made so much noise that a deep sigh sounded from inside and an irritated voice said, "I'm sure I hear someone walking round the house all the time."

Then another voice, soft and sleepy, replied, "Go to sleep, Mum, it's just cats."

Petya waited trembling until all was quiet, then he took from his pocket the note, tied round a stone, and tossed it in through the open window.

Covered with cold sweat he slunk back. When he at last came to his canvas bed and started silently undressing, he heard Pavlik's ominous whisper from under the blanket.

"Aha! Think I don't know what you've been doing? Throwing in a note—huh! Thank your stars you didn't get your ears pulled!"

"You little swine," hissed Petya.

"You're another," mumbled Pavlik sleepily.

THE RENDEZVOUS

It is hard to think how Petya would have got through the following day if the watering of the orchard had not started again.

Petya stood zealously turning the cistern handle to pull up the bucket, then letting the water out into the tank from which it was carried all over the garden. He had himself volunteered for this tiring, monotonous job which would leave his mind free to think of the rendezvous.

The unoiled axle of the latticed iron drum squealed mournfully. The chain rattled crisply as it wound and unwound. The heavy bucket crawled slowly up, the falling drops sounding metallically hard in the echoing darkness of the cistern, then it raced down again, dragging the wet chain after it, so that the drum whirled wildly round and one had to skip aside pretty quickly to avoid a sharp blow from the handle.

His arms and back ached, his shirt was soaking, sweat ran down his face and dripped from his chin, but Petya went on working, refusing to rest. He was in a state of bliss which at one moment nearly turned to despair when the day darkened, clouds came rolling up and a few drops fell, promising a downpour in the evening that would put any meeting on the steppe out of the question.

However, the rain passed over, the clouds dispersed and towards evening a cool breeze sprang up—a most fortunate circumstance, since it allowed him to put on his cape.

When Petya, after making a wide detour for caution's sake, came to the little path by the cottage, the setting sun was blazing over the steppe and his shadow was so long that it looked as though he were on stilts.

The monastery bells were ringing for vespers. From the distance came the melancholy song of reapers. The white wall of the cottage was tinted pink by the sun and the windows were a blinding gold. Petya's hands were like ice, and his mouth felt cold, as though he had been sucking peppermints.

Without any real reason for it, Petya had told himself that she would most certainly come. But although he would not for the world have admitted it, a secret doubt lurked at the bottom of his heart.

He Lay prone on the grass, his chin resting on his fists, staring at the cottage as though by sheer force of will he could compel her now, this very moment, to come out on the steppe. Actually, this already was not love but insistent pride, not passion but obstinacy; it was an aimless turbulence of spirit, the wish to bring his ideal down from heaven to earth and assure himself that Marina was not a scrap better than other girls—for instance, Motya— probably worse.

And yet his imagination still enthroned her as the only one, the unattainable

one, despite the sty and that chin like the toe of a shoe—and perhaps even because of that.

Suddenly, between waves of despair and hope, he saw the familiar figure pass the cottage, up to the waist in wormwood; he could hardly believe his eyes, so great was his happiness. Marina came to him quickly, almost too quickly, shading her eyes with her hand from the sun that beat straight into her face. She was in a short summer coat with the collar raised, and her hair was done a new way; the same black bow was there, but a sprig of jasmine had been added.

"Good evening," she said, holding out her hand to Petya. "I had an awful job getting away. You've no idea what Mum's like. You'll see, she'll call me back at once. Come along quick."

She smiled and walked along the path leading into the steppe, followed by Petya, who was knocked right off his balance and even disappointed by her confident ease, and especially by her frankly mischievous smile.

Whatever he had expected, it had been something very different—shyness, embarrassment, silent reproach, even severity—but most certainly not *this*. One might think she had only been waiting for the chance to run out to meet a boy! She did not even ask why he wanted her to come. And that jasmine in her hair! Petya could see now that she was small only in size, in age she must be fifteen; and she had probably had plenty of experience in love affairs—perhaps she had even been kissed.

In general, it was as though she had suddenly turned into her own elder sister.

"Aren't you hot in that cape?" she asked, glancing round.

"Aren't you hot in your coat?" Petya retorted dully.

Evidently she did not understand irony, for she answered, "It's a summer coat, your cape's a heavy woollen one."

"A Swiss cape, specially for the mountains!" remarked Petya, not without a boastful note.

"Yes, I see that," answered Marina.

When they were a good distance from the house, they left the path and strolled slowly side by side among the suslik holes and wild flowers, which threw down long shadows. For a time they said nothing, listening to the rustle of the grass and flowers under their feet.

The sun sank behind a distant barrow. A cool breeze rose.

"Are you fond of the steppe?" asked Marina.

"I love the mountains," Petya answered sombrely.

He had not the faintest idea how he ought to proceed now. He had got what he wanted, this was a real 'rendezvous, it was even more—a long walk out on the steppe at sunset. But all the same he was awkward and embarrassed. In some way she had got the upper hand over him in the first moment. And well he knew it.

"I love the steppe," said Marina, "though I like mountains too."

"No, the mountains are finer," said Petya stubbornly.

He had never in his life found it so difficult to talk to a girl. How much easier it had been with Motya, for instance. Of course, Motya loved him, while this one—you couldn't guess. ... But the worst of all was that she did not display the faintest desire to know why he had asked her to meet him. What was that—pretence or indifference?

With every moment that passed he loved her more, he was most desperately in love. And not at all as he had been before, he was no longer in love with a far-away dream, but with an enchantingly close reality.

As they strolled along she would now and then give a little laugh without any visible reason, and that teasing laughter seemed very familiar to Petya, although he could not for the life of him remember where and when he had heard it.

"Just wait, my dear," thought Petya, admiring Marina's pretty head with the black ribbon and the sprig of jasmine. "Just wait, we'll see what song you'll sing in a little while."

"Just imagine," he said with a crooked, sarcastic smile, "once upon a time I was most tremendously in love with you."

"You—with me?" asked Marina in surprise and shrugged her shoulders. "When could that have been?"

"A long time ago. Last year," sighed Petya. "And you, I suppose, you never even guessed?"

She halted and looked up at him with grave probing eyes.

"That is quite impossible."

"But it was so."

"Where, and when?"

Petya looked at her with tender reproach and said very slowly and distinctly, "June. Italy. Naples. The railway station. Can you deny it?"

In an instant Marina's face changed completely; she looked serious, alarmed. Her colour mounted.

"You're making a mistake," she said curtly, with a look that seemed to shut him out at once. "We've never been in Italy ... or any other foreign country."

Petya knew this was not true.

"Yes, you have, you were wearing the same coat and the same black bow in your hair!" he cried eagerly. "You walked along the platform with your mother. And Maxim Gorky was there. Our train started and I leaned out of the window and looked at you, and you looked back at me. Wasn't that so? Didn't you look at me? Can you deny it?"

She frowned and shook her head in silence, but the deep colour did not leave her face, even her chin was red. She was beginning to be angry.

"Can you deny it? Can you?" Petya insisted.

"Nothing of the kind ever happened, you've just dreamed it!"

"I even know where you were going. Shall I tell you? Well? To Paris!" cried Petya with a kind of bitter triumph.

She shook her head land the colour began to leave her face.

"Marie Rose, Longjumeau," said Petya softly, impressively, looking bard into her eyes and enjoying her discomfiture.

She turned so pale that Petya was frightened. Then her face stiffened in a look of contempt.

"You're making it all up," she said carelessly and even forced herself to laugh, a strange laugh that sounded so familiar.

Suddenly he realized it was Vera's mermaid laugh from *The Precipice,* and he himself was the miserable Raisky.

"Remember once and for all that nothing of the sort ever happened," Marina said. She turned and walked rapidly back towards the house.

Petya ran after her.

"Don't follow me," she said without turning.

"Marina, wait a bit ... but why?" Petya groaned piteously.

She turned, let her eyes travel over him from head to foot with a contemptuous look, said, "Babbler!" and ran home.

Petya had never expected the long-awaited rendezvous to end in fiasco. He was completely puzzled by her anger. All he knew was that he had lost her, if not for ever, at least for a very long time. And when? At the very moment everything was perfect, when dusk was creeping over the steppe and a great moon hung over the distant hills, with a pale light like the glow of a paper lantern.

CAESAR'S COMMENTARIES

or .some days after that Marina did not appear at all. Petya tossed a number of notes in through the window, trying on various pretexts to lure her to meet him, even promising to reveal some tremendously important secret, but nothing helped. And he realized he had lost her for ever.

He was in despair. And his despair was deepened by the fact that there was absolutely nobody to whom he could confide his unsuccessful romance, pour out in eloquent words his "tormented soul," as Petya mentally described the painful sting of hurt pride. So Gavrik's appearance was a godsend.

He turned up quite suddenly, as was his wont of late. Petya saw him standing in the orchard, but it was a puzzle how he had got there. Not through the gate, that was certain, for Petya himself had been standing there all the time, watching to see whether anyone would go to fetch kerosene.

Gavrik had a worn textbook tricked under his belt and carried an exercise book rolled into a tube with which he kept angrily striking his knee. In general, his look was sombre.

"Hullo, come to study a bit?"

"No, to catch sparrows," Gavrik answered curtly.

Petya chose a shady spot with a view of the cottage, and they sat down among the chamomiles beneath a cherry tree.

"Well, what have you got there?" asked Petya languidly.

"I have to learn *De hello Gallico."*

"Aha. Now listen, and I'll explain it all. The point is that *De hello Gallico* was written by Caesar. He was called Gaius Julius and he was the Roman emperor who—"

"I know all that. I have to read it and translate it, and learn the first chapter by heart."

"All right, we can do that," said Petya obligingly. "Open your book and start translating."

"I've done the translation," said Gavrik.

"What do you want, then?"

"I've got to learn the first chapter. And that's far worse than learning poetry so far as I'm concerned."

"But it is necessary," Petya said didactically, gradually slipping into the role of teacher. "Give me your book, I'll read aloud and you repeat everything after me."

"But don't you know it by heart?" asked Gavrik suspiciously.

Petya, however, ignored this indiscreet question; he took the book out of Gavrik's hand and began reading with great expression:

"Gallia est omnis divisa in paries tres. Repeat that."

"Gallia est omnis divisa in paries ires" Gavrik repeated, his forehead deeply creased.

"Good!" said Petya. "Now—"

But at that moment he thought he saw a movement by the cottage. He craned his neck to see better.

"No good looking over there," Gavrik said quietly.

Petya started.

"How did you guess?" he asked, blushing. They knew one another too well for pretence.

"Oh, don't play the bread-and-butter miss!" snapped Gavrik. "Anyone might think the Pavlovskayas had dropped down from the skies. You know very well it was we who sent them—to keep them out of the way of the police. You need a head on your shoulders, not a turnip. They're not just ordinary people getting out of the summer heat, they're in hiding," he said incisively. "And they're working. And then you had to start off with all that romantic nonsense! All right, amuse yourself with it if you like, but don't bother them with your talk. And that's just what you've been doing. 'Why, I know you. Why, I saw you abroad! Marie Rose, Longjumeau!' Have you any idea what. Marie Rose and Longjumeau mean?" Gavrik suddenly realized that his voice had risen; he stopped short and looked about him. There was nobody near, but he continued in a lower tone, "It is from there that all the instructions come. And since I've gone so far, I don't mind telling you that if they catch Pavlovskaya, it'll be a serious blow. I'm talking to you like this because we consider you one of us. Am I right?"

Gavrik looked hard at Petya through narrowed eyes, awaiting a straight answer to a straight question.

Petya thought a moment, then nodded silently. It was the first time Gavrik had spoken so openly, definitely, keeping nothing back, calling everything by its name.

"I swear—" Petya began and felt his throat close up with excitement. He wanted badly to say something deeply significant, perhaps impressive. "I swear—" he repeated, and tears welled in his eyes.

"There you are, I knew you'd start right off with something of that sort," said Gavrik. "You needn't bother. Fine words butter no parsnips, and we've heard plenty of talkers."

"I'm not just a talker," Petya said in a huff.

"I don't mean you, though you're not the silent type— Marie Rose, Longjumeau. You drop that sort of thing. This isn't a game, it's serious. And if it comes to the point, we shan't stand on ceremony with you. You know what underground work is?"

"Of course I do," said Petya, not without dignity.

"Oh no, you don't," Gavrik answered. "In the first place it means holding your tongue. Tell one person today, and he'll spill everything tomorrow. You can never get back what you've said. Do you know what she thought?"

"Who?"

"Marina. She thought you'd been sent after her. A busy."

"What's a busy?"

"You're really slow to catch on. A busy's a detective. A police agent. It's time you knew things like that. You alarmed the Pavlovskayas so badly they were planning to leave that very night, to get somewhere a safe distance from your place. A good thing I happened along just then, or they'd have been gone. They'd got their things packed, but I told them you were more or less one of us, and not to worry."

Petya sat silent, crushed. He had never imagined his romance could have such serious consequences. In general there was much that had never occurred to him.

"She's certainly a nice girl. I wouldn't mind taking a stroll arm in arm with her at twilight myself. But I've no time," Gavrik sighed.

Petya stared at him with something like horror, unable to believe his ears. To talk like that about "her"! It was sacrilege. But Gavrik, stretched out among the chamomiles, his arms under his head, continued in the same tone, as though it were the most ordinary thing in the world:

"On the other hand, think of her. She has no father. He died abroad last year of galloping consumption. He belonged to our organization, too. Her mother's a Party worker. She's got a false passport. They always have to be moving from place to place, hiding, changing their rooms. The girl's got to study somehow, and not fall behind. They stay at home all the time because they can only go out when it's absolutely necessary. And after all she's young, it's dull for her. So it was natural enough that when you threw that note in, she was pleased. Why shouldn't she go for a walk with a boy once in a while? And by the way, believe it or not, she liked you, too. But then you went and spoiled everything with your big mouth."

Petya flinched as from a toothache.

"Wait a moment," he said, "how do you know all this?"

Gavrik stared at Petya with unconcealed surprise.

"Well! Do you think they feed on air? Incidentally, that's not their name at all, but it doesn't matter. I dash over twice a week with provisions. Well, and sometimes there are instructions from the committee too."

Another unpleasant surprise for Petya. So Gavrik often visited Marina, he was a friend of the family.

"So that's it! But why do you never come to us?" asked Petya, with something like jealousy.

"Because I generally come at night."

"Cloak and dagger stuff?" Petya asked with a note of irony.

"What do you think? Why attract attention? You never can tell who may notice, especially in times like these. Don't you know what's going on? There are strikes all over. The secret police are going crazy, sniffing everywhere—no joke about it. It's worse than 1905."

Again Petya felt the atmosphere of Near Mills, which had faded away of late.

"What about a smoke, comrade?" Gavrik said, pulling a package of cheap cigarettes from his pocket.

Petya had never smoked and he felt no desire to. But the word "comrade," which Gavrik pronounced with a kind of special intonation of stern independence, the very look of the package of Peal Cigarettes made by the Laferrne Co., five kopeks for twenty, advertised in the *Pravda,* made him pull a stiff cigarette from the package and place it awkwardly in his mouth.

"Good idea," said Petya, imitating Gavrik's sternness and independence, and squinting at the end of the cigarette as Gavrik held a match to it.

They smoked for a few moments, Gavrik with obvious enjoyment, inhaling and spitting like a real workman, Petya removing his cigarette every moment from his mouth and for some reason eyeing the cardboard end that emitted a white trickle of heavy smoke.

Nothing more was said about the Pavlovskayas. They worked a little on Caesar, then Gavrik left, saying in farewell, "Well, that's that. The main thing is not to lose your nerve."

What that applied to, Petya did not know.

Now he was filled with a turmoil of contradictory emotions—jealousy, anger at himself, hope, despair and, strangest of all, an ardent, surging thirst for life.

He thought of all kinds of ways to remedy his error and draw Marina out for a meeting. Day in, day out, this filled his mind.

QUEEN OF THE MARKET

Just at this time the early cherries began to ripen. They ripened quickly, almost visibly, and every kind at once —black, red, pink and white. Although the Bacheis had been eagerly watching the progress of this great harvest, nevertheless, the actual realization of its size came upon them suddenly one fine morning when a black cloud of starlings swooped down over the orchard, followed by a grey cloud of sparrows.

The birds descended on the trees; and while Vasily Petrovich, Petya, Pavlik, Dunyasha and Gavrila ran about below frightening off the marauders with umbrellas, sticks, hats, handkerchiefs and shouts, Auntie put on her lace gloves and hat, and, sparkling with happy excitement, took the horse-tram to town where she intended first to find out the retail price of early cherries, and then to sell them wholesale at the market.

It was evening when she returned, and as she approached the orchard she heard shots. It was Pavlik, instructed by Gavrila, firing an old shot-gun which they had found in the attic.

"Heavens! What are you doing?" she gasped in horror as she saw her gentle little darling pushing a charge into the gun.

"Frightening off the sparrows. Look out!" Pavlik shouted and with a most ferocious expression fired somewhere into the air, after which a little cloud of feathers drifted down.

Evidently, the war against the birds was going well.

"Well, what's the commercial news?" asked Vasily Petrovich, rubbing his hands. "I hope it's something good."

"Yes and no," answered Auntie.

"Now, just how do I take that?" he asked with a cheerful smile.

At least a dozen times that day he had gone round the orchard and seen that the harvest was not merely good, it was amazingly, fantastically rich. Whole poods of very large cherries hung from the branches, gleaming in the sun like jewels with all shades of red, from the palest creamy pink, through coral, to that dark crimson which looks almost black.

"How do you mean?" he asked again, not quite so cheerfully this time—he had seen that Auntie looked rather upset.

"I'll tell you everything in a minute, let me wash up first, and for goodness' sake, a cup of tea. I'm dying for tea!"

All this boded nothing good.

In half an hour Auntie was sitting on the veranda eagerly drinking tea.

"It was like this. First of all I went to a number of fruit shops. There aren't

many cherries yet, and the shops are selling them at fifteen to twenty kopeks a pound."

"Well, well, well—that's splendid!" cried Vasily Petrovich, mentally calculating how much they would get from each tree, even at a conservative estimate of two poods per tree. "If that's the case, we're rich!"

"Yes, but wait a minute," said Auntie wearily. "That's the retail price. We want to sell wholesale. So I went to the wholesale market and found the fruit section. It turned out that the wholesale price was much lower."

"Of course, quite natural!" cried Vasily Petrovich stoutly. "It always is. What is it?"

"They offer two rubles forty a pood. Our delivery."

Vasily Petrovich touched the steel frame of his pince-nez and his lips moved as he calculated once more.

"H'm ... yes... well, of course that's rather a different sum. But all the same it's quite good, quite good. We'll be able to make our payment and have quite a nice little profit too." And Vasily Petrovich looked gaily at Auntie through his pince-nez.

"You're very unpractical," said Auntie. "Don't forget the two-forty's with our delivery." With emphasis she repeated the words, "Our delivery!"

"Ah yes ... delivery," mumbled Vasily Petrovich. "Now, just what does that imply?"

"It means we've got to bring the cherries to them there, at the wholesale market."

"Well? What's wrong with that? We'll bring them. And then—kindly hand over the money!"

"Oh, it's impossible to discuss anything with you!" cried Auntie, exasperated. "Just stop a moment and think —*how* are we going to deliver them? With what? We have no horse, no cart, no baskets, no bast, no—we've absolutely nothing, and no means of getting them there. Not to mention picking the fruit—that is, if the birds leave any of it. We haven't even ladders."

"M'yes," mumbled Vasily Petrovich vaguely, blew his nose and said, "But it's all very queer. Why does it have to be our delivery? You ought to have told them—if you want our cherries, please come and get them."

"I did."

"Well?"

"They refused."

"H'm. There must be some misunderstanding there. After all, there's such a thing as competition. If one refused, perhaps another would agree."

"I went round 'all of them, and the impresson I got was that there isn't any competition at all, it's all one band. They're amazingly alike even to-look at. Dark-blue shirts, red faces, sheepskin hats. The same kind of robbers as those Persians who came to try and force down the price. And they all talk about some Madame Storozhenko. It looks as if all the wholesale fruit trade is in this lady's hands."

"Well, why didn't you go and talk to her, then?"

"I tried. But you can't catch her. From morning to night she drives round orchards buying up the crops."

"What are we going to do, then?" asked Vasily Petrovich.

"I don't know," answered Auntie.

They sat staring at each other in perplexity. Vasily Petrovich wiped his brown neck with *a* dirty handkerchief while Auntie drummed with her fingers on a saucer. And Petya felt disaster again looming over the family, but disaster much more terrible than that other time when the orchard was drying up.

The cherries ripened every hour. The red ones blackened, the pink ones reddened, the cream-coloured ones turned a warm pink, while the white ones deepened to a honey colour that made the mouth water in anticipation of their sweetness. From early morning the war against the birds went on. They fastened bright-coloured rags to the branches, they set up scarecrows, they ran about under the trees clapping their hands and shouting hoarsely, and every now and then there was *a* report from the shotgun.

It was even harder work than hoeing and bringing water. Oh, how Petya learned to hate starlings! How different they seemed now from those poetic birds whistling gaily in a dozen different keys, making a spring day seem brighter, paths more shady, and the little white clouds look as though they were sweetly sleeping.

Now the birds were marauders descending in flocks upon the orchard from all sides. They pecked the cherries with their sharp beaks, always finding the ripest and tearing out a triangular piece of pulp.

They did not so much eat cherries as spoil them. When they were driven off the trees, the whole flock continued flying about above them, describing circles and swooping curves.

The Bacheis tried picking the cherries themselves, standing on chairs, and discovered how difficult it was for inexperienced hands. They decided to start off by selling cherries retail and sent Gavrila with a big basket to Bolshoi Fontan.

Gavrila spent all day going round the villas and brought back seventy kopeks and a strong smell of vodka, told them thickly that this was all he had been given and went off to sleep in the weeds behind the stable.

Some summer visitors from nearby villas came to the orchard to buy cherries—two pretty girls with lace parasols and a student in a white tunic. They asked for two pounds, but as Auntie had no scales she poured about five into the dainty basket the student carried over his shoulder on a stick.

-The girls at once hung cherries over their little ears and dimpled and laughed, looking prettier than ever, while Auntie gazed at them as though wondering, "Dear God, how can anyone be so happy!"

Then the postman brought a typed letter from the notary containing the ominous warning that the final date for payment was in three days.

Auntie hurried to town again but returned empty-handed; Madame Storozhenko had been away again and the Persians, as though mocking all common sense, had offered not two-forty, but a ruble-thirty a pood, delivered. It seemed likely that they had been rude to Auntie as well, because she was nearly crying as she tore off her hat and paced up and down the veranda saying again and again, "What rascals! Heavens above, what scoundrels!"

Only one thing remained—to hire carts, horses and baskets from the German settlers, and flying in the face of Vasily Petrovich's principles, to exploit labour by hiring girls from the villages round about and get the fruit off the trees as quickly as possible—for the birds had already pecked a quarter of it.

The Germans refused to let them have any carts or horses and the girls were

already working in other orchards.

"Curse the hour when I let myself get drawn into this idiotic business!" cried Vasily Petrovich.

"Vasily Petrovich, for your dead wife's sake have mercy on me!" said Auntie through her tears, in a voice that showed her nose was swollen.

Then, to wind up the whole business, the gate opened creakingly and a britzka rolled in. One Persian sat on the box, another stood on the step, and a very large, stout lady in a white linen coat and a dusty hat ornamented with faded forget-me-nots swayed and jolted on the seat. The britzka went straight across the beds of petunias and flowering tobacco and halted by the house. The Persians at once seized the lady's elbows arid she climbed awkwardly down.

She had a fat but muscular face with a moustache, purple cheeks and expressionless eyes.

"Here, you, boy—what's your name—don't stand there staring, run and call the master, and look sharp," she said in the raucous voice of the market-place, and was just going to sit down, puffing, on an iron garden chair brought by one of the Persians when Auntie appeared, followed by Vasily Petrovich. "Are you the owners here?" she asked and without waiting for an answer held out a hand with short thick fingers projecting from a black lace mitten first to Vasily Petrovich, then to Auntie.

"Good morning," she said. "I'm Madame Storozhenko."

Auntie bubbled over with excitement.

"Ah, how extremely kind of you," she twittered, assuming her society smile. "I have twice tried to find you at the wholesale market but you were always away. You are such an elusive lady!" And Auntie shook her finger charmingly at Madame Storozhenko. "But I see that if the mountain does not go to Mohammed, then Mohammed comes to the mountain."

"It makes no difference," said Madame Storozhenko, ignoring the aphorism about the mountain and Mohammed. "They told me you wanted to sell your crop. I'll buy it."

"In that case, perhaps, you would care to look at the orchard?" said Auntie, exchanging a most significant look with Vasily Petrovich.

"I know that orchard like the palm of my hand," answered Madame Storozhenko. "It's not my first time here. I always bought the crop when Madame Vasyutinskaya was running it. And I must say she ran it much better. Half your cherries are pecked. Of course, it's no business of mine, but I can tell you, you've neglected the orchard badly. You'll hardly make ends meet this way. I've been trading in fruit only five years myself, before that I dealt in fish, but you can ask anyone and they'll tell you Madame Storozhenko knows a thing or two about fruit. You call those cherries? They're more like lice. You can take my word for it."

Vasily Petrovich and Auntie stood before Madame Storozhenko in alternating hope and fear. Their fate depended on her alone, but there was nothing to be read on her coarse face. At last Madame Storozhenko spoke:

"Take it or leave it, I've no time to waste on you. Here!" She opened a big leather bag hanging on a strap over her shoulder, and took out a crisp hundred-ruble note, evidently prepared beforehand. "There you are!"

"What—only a hundred rubles! Why, we've three hundred to pay on the note of hand alone!"

"Take it and less chat," repeated Madame Storozhenko. "And say thank you for it, too. At least you'll have nothing more to worry about, I'll look after the picking, packing and transport.

"Madame Storozhenko, have you no conscience?" Vasily Petrovich expostulated. "It's sheer robbery!"

"My dear man," Madame Storozhenko wheezed condescendingly, "I've got to make something out of it, haven't I?"

"Yes, but these cherries will sell for at least five hundred rubles, we've reckoned it up," said Auntie.

"Well, if you've reckoned it up, go and sell your crop yourselves and don't waste other people's time. A hundred rubles, that's my last word."

"But we've got to pay on a note of hand."

"I know. In a day or two you've got to pay Madame Vasyutinskaya three hundred and if you don't, you lose the place. And lose it you will, because you've no money and you'll be bankrupt anyway. So my advice is to take what you can, at least it'll feed you a little while. As for Madame Vasyutinskaya's property, she'll rent it to me through the notary. It'll do much better with me than with you."

"We'll see about all that!" said Auntie, turning pale.

"Better drop those airs!" snapped Madame Storozhenko with unconcealed contempt, looking Vasily Petrovich and Auntie up and down with a black, incomprehensible malice. "You think I don't know your sort? You haven't a single kopek between you. You're beggars! Paupers! And call yourselves intellectuals!"

"My dear madame," said Vasily Petrovich, "what right have you to speak this way?"

Madame Storozhenko turned majestically to Auntie.

"Listen—what's your name—tell this man of yours to climb off his high horse, because in three days I'll kick you out of here with all your rubbish. Ragamuffins!"

Vasily Petrovich made a convulsive movement, he wanted to speak but could only stamp his foot and make strangled sounds like a dumb man; then he slumped down on the veranda step clutching his head in his hands.

"Take the hundred and write a receipt," said Madame Storozhenko, holding it out to Auntie unconcernedly.

"You're a wicked, vile woman!" cried Auntie, trembling from head to foot. She burst into tears and stumbled into the house.

It was such a dreadful, disgraceful scene that not only Petya, Pavlik and Dunyasha—even Gavrila was shocked into immobility, and nobody noticed Gavrik, who had emerged some time before from among the trees.

Now he marched slowly, with a slight roll, to Madame Storozhenko, his right hand thrust deep in his trouser pocket.

"Get out of here, you mangy old market shark!" he hissed through his teeth. "Get out!"

She stared at him, amazed, then suddenly recognized in this sixteen-year-old workman the little beggar boy, the grandson of old Chernoivanenko, who used to bring bullheads to her at the wholesale market when she still had a fish stall. Madame Storozhenko had a good memory and she realized in a flash that she was faced with her old enemy. In those days, however, he had been small and

defenceless and she could do as she liked with him; now he was very different. Instinctively the old fox sensed danger.

"Now, now, none of your bullying!" she cried, moving restlessly about by the britzka, and turned to her Persians. "What are you thinking of? Smash his mug in!"

The Persians advanced, lowering their heads in the sheepskin hats; but Gavrik withdrew his hand from his pocket holding a knuckle-duster, and his white lips tightened into a straight line.

"Get out of here!" he repeated ominously. He seized the reins close to the bit and led the horse out of the gate, while Madame Storozhenko and the Persians clambered into the moving britzka as best they could.

For a long time the hat with the forget-me-nots could be seen moving along the road between fields of green grain, and Madame Storozhenko's voice could be heard screeching curses and obscene threats in the direction of the orchard.

Gavrik returned, breathing hard as though he had been doing heavy physical work. He held out his hand in silence to Petya, patted Pavlik's shoulder and stood for a while beside Vasily Petrovich, who was still sitting on the steps, his face in his hands.

Then Gavrik spat angrily, said, "Well, we'll see," and ran through the orchard out into the steppe, disappearing as suddenly as he had come.

For a long time all were silent—they felt that there was nothing more to be said. At last Vasily Petrovich passed his hand down his face with a visible effort and wiped his glasses with the hem of his long shirt; an unexpected smile appeared on his face—a helpless childlike smile.

"Thus, their feasting turned to disaster," he said with a sigh.

But strange as it might seem, it was a sigh of relief.

FRIENDS IN NEED

For a little while calm and quietness reigned in the house and in the orchard. The Bacheis went about as though they had just awakened and were not yet quite sure whether it was all real or a dream. They were very considerate to each other, even affectionate. In the evening they ate yoghurt and drank tea. They chatted and joked. But there was not one word about their situation; it was as though they were saving all their physical ,and mental strength for that very near future, the thought of which was so terrible.

They went to bed early and slept well, luxuriating in rest after all their labour and perturbation, knowing that the coming day would bring them nothing new.

At dawn Petya felt someone tugging his foot. He opened his eyes and saw the wide-open window and Gavrik standing by his bed. The sun had not yet risen, but it was already quite light in the room; the cool air of early morning was pouring in; outside, the trees stood dark green against a crimson strip of sky, and the cocks were crowing sleepily in the distance.

"Get up!" whispered Gavrik.

"Why?" Petya whispered back. He was so accustomed to his friend's way of popping up without warning that his appearance at this early hour was in no way startling.

"Get your clothes on and out to work!" said Gavrik mysteriously, gaily, and jerked his head towards the open window. He turned, jumped on to the sill, and disappeared in the orchard.

Petya knew Gavrik, he knew this was no fooling, it was serious. He dressed rapidly and shivering in the early chill followed Gavrik out through the window.

Voices came from the orchard. Petya went round the house and saw people under the cherry trees. There was the beat of axes, the squeal of saws. A little way off a lad he did not know passed by with a new roughly made ladder on his shoulder. A similar ladder leaned against a tree, and on the top rung stood a barefoot girl, one hand holding a branch heavy with fruit, the other shading her eyes from the sun which was just rising over the sea bathing her in blinding but still cool rays.

"Petya!" the girl called. He recognized Motya. "What are you doing here?" he asked, approaching.

"Picking your fruit," she answered gaily, and Petya saw the basket hanging from her arm. "But you've quite forgotten us," she added with a sigh. "You never come to Near Mills now."

She too had hung cherries over her ears and Petya thought they made her look even prettier than before.

"Well, here we are, you see," she went on merrily, pulling cherries off the branches and dropping them into her basket, leaves and all. "We've been working over an hour, and you've only just managed to get your eyes open. Lazy-bones! God'll punish you for it!" She laughed so heartily that her foot slipped.

"Oh, catch me, I'm falling!" she cried, but managed to hold on, while cherries rained down on Petya from the basket.

"Look here, seriously, what's going on?" Petya asked.

"Can't you see for yourself?" said Motya. "Your friends have come to gather your crop so it won't be lost."

Petya looked round. And everywhere, on the trees and under them, he saw more or less familiar faces from Near Mills. With surprise he recognized Uncle Fedya Sinichkin, the old railwayman, the young schoolmistress and others of Terenty's occasional or regular visitors. Motya's brother Zhenya was there too with all his friends, sitting in the trees like monkeys, filling caps, baskets land boxes with amazing dexterity and speed. Wherever Petya looked he saw bare legs, bare, sunburned arms and cotton shirts, from all sides he heard voices, laughter, jests and chaff. Before he had fully taken it all in, Gavrik came running up carrying a pile of old sacks and bast matting on his shoulder.

"Here, take hold, put these under the trees," he panted, and tossed a number of sacks over to Petya.

With a feeling that something very good was happening, caught up in the atmosphere of gay activity, Petya promptly set to work spreading out the sacks, crawling round them on his knees to smooth out the folds.

Soon great, ripe cherries began falling on them with soft thuds from baskets, caps and aprons.

When Auntie, wakened by the noise, came out on the veranda to investigate, her first thought was that Madame Storozhenko had already taken possession of the orchard and her roughs were unceremoniously plundering the crop.

Although she had resigned herself to the knowledge that this was inevitable, nevertheless, the sight of strangers stripping the trees was too much for her. She turned pale and cried weakly, "How dare you! You've no right! Robbers!"

"Na-a-ay, you're all wrong," Gavrik half sang on a warm, affectionate note as he passed her dragging a ladder, "We're your own folks, from Near Mills. Now, don't you worry about anything, not a single cherry'll go astray, I'll see to that personally. Except maybe one or two that drop into somebody's mouth by accident, that sort of thing might very well happen. But what's it matter? You see yourself what a grand crop it is. I hope you never have any worse! Selling it retail, you'll get at least three rubles a pood. And as for that old market bitch!" And Gavrik put his thumb to his nose.

"Stop a minute, I don't understand, won't you explain?" said Auntie, looking into Gavrik's angry, determined face and trying to make out what it was all about.

"Don't be angry with us for not asking you first," he said. "No time for it—this is when a day feeds a year, as the saying goes. Let the moment slip and it's gone! We had to get hold of the wood for ladders, and the sacks and bast mats and all that sort of thing. Wasn't it the thing to do? Or should we have let that old shark make beggars of you all? No sir! Time to stop that! They've sucked enough of our blood. The day's gone when we used to stand in front of them like

asses."

Auntie stared at Gavrik, his militant stance, a boy with a peeling nose and yet a man with serious, angry eyes that said much more than his words.

Perhaps she did not yet understand everything, but the main thing was clear. Kind folks from Near Mills had come to their aid, and again there was hope that they might be saved. Auntie's housewifely instincts reawakened.

She quickly tied a kerchief round her head and hurried about under the trees, putting this and that right. She told them to place the sacks and matting so that they would not have to carry the fruit so far, asked the pickers to keep the various kinds of cherries separate, gaily told the boys not to put more in their mouths than in the baskets, sent Gavrila to fetch some buckets of drinking water, then herself climbed a ladder into one of the trees, hung cherries over her ears and, singing "The Sun is Low" at the top of her voice, began picking cherries and dropping them into an old hat-box.

What a wonderful day that was! It was a long time since Petya had felt so full of bubbling happiness. True, he had no ladder and did not pick cherries from the trees, which would have been more interesting, but running about underneath was not so bad either. Now here, now there, a full heavy basket descended from the leafy branches; he caught it in his arms, poured its contents out on to the nearest pile, returned to the tree, sent the basket up again with a bounce from his head and went on to the next tree where another awaited him.

His arms ached pleasantly from the unaccustomed exercise, and it was wonderful to see the pile of dark, shining berries growing before his eyes, prettily mingled with dark leaves, to which striped wasps added flecks of bright gold.

Petya was in charge of ten trees. Practically every minute somebody called him to take a filled basket. But Motya's voice was the most insistent.

"Petya, come here, mine's full! Where are you? Don't be so lazy! Here!"

A soft arm in a pink cotton sleeve would lower a heavy basket, and through the leaves Petya could see Motya's rosy face and a cherry stone between her lips.

By midday all were tired, and Gavrik marched up and down between the trees, calling out, "Break off, dinner-time, break off!"

That was when Petya suddenly saw Marina and her mother. They were quite close, coming towards him with arms round one another's waists like two girls, and the cherries hung on their ears and the baskets in their hands showed they must have been helping too.

At the sight of Madame Pavlovskaya Petya's courage oozed out of his toes. What if she had guessed who it was that rustled in the weeds at night and tossed love-notes in through the window? Why, she really might pull his ears! That first time he saw her she had looked rather stern and disapproving. But now, in her old house frock, with cherries hung on her ears, she seemed very kind and good-humoured. And Marina smiled with evident pleasure, not a trace was left of that cold, contemptuous look with which she had thrown the dreadful *word* "babbler" at him.

"Good morning," Petya said in confusion, and in an effort to produce the best possible impression on Marina's mother essayed la polite click of his heels, which came off rather badly owing to his being barefoot. But nobody seemed to notice.

"You're quite right, it really is a marvellously good morning," said Marina's

mother with a kind of deep, serious smile. "Isn't it, Petya? Your name is Petya, isn't it?"

She examined him with interest, for she knew well enough about the notes. Marina, for her part, glanced up innocently and said, "It's a long time since I've seen you," just as if nothing had ever happened.

She provoked him. Petya would have liked to make some brilliantly witty reply, but all he could manage was to mumble morosely, "Well, that's not my fault."

"Why, whose is it, then?" said Marina captiously, turned a little away from Petya and began picking at a rubbery drop of resin on the bark of the cherry tree under which she stood.

"You know whose," Petya replied with tender reproach, and then took fright—wasn't that almost a declaration?

Auntie came up just at the right moment to greet the visitors and rescue her nephew from the awkward situation.

"Ah, it's you? At last! I never seem to see you. How can you shut yourself up like that? After all, people come out here to enjoy the country, the sea air, the garden. It's all here waiting for you and still you stay indoors all day," she twittered, at once assuming the mincing, society manner which, according to her ideas, was the correct one for a refined owner of a villa talking to her refined guests. "Good gracious, what do I see?" And Auntie clasped her hands. "You have baskets! Is it possible that you have come to help us? But that is too charming, too kind of you! I won't conceal it, we were in a difficult situation, a dreadful situation. Such a wonderful harvest, and we, impractical people that we are.... You are a cultured person yourself, you will understand."

"Yes, oh yes," said Madame Pavlovskaya coldly. "It is a small but very typical incident, clearly illustrating the concentration of commercial capital. It would seem that this Storozhenko—or whatever her name is—has a monopoly of the local fruit market and is now destroying her weaker competitors by fair means or foul. You must have been very blind not to have seen it at once. The strong swallow up the weak—such is the law of the historical development of capitalism."

Auntie listened in alarm. Madame Pavlovskaya, it seemed, was fully informed about all their affairs, despite the fact that she never showed herself outside the cottage.

Of all she said Auntie understood one thing only—that it was very "political," and Madame Pavlovskaya must be a dangerous person. Nevertheless, she tried to bring the talk back to the society tone.

"You are absolutely right," she said, "and Madame Storozhenko is a real monster. A rude, uneducated animal, absolutely out of place in decent society."

Pavlovskaya frowned.

"Madame Storozhenko is first and foremost a foul creature that must be fought."

"Yes, but how?" said Auntie, with a shrug of distaste. "I can't complain to a magistrate—it would be paying her too big a compliment!"

Pavlovskaya looked earnestly at Auntie for a moment, then suddenly smiled, the way one smiles at children who ask foolish questions.

"The magistrate? That's fine," she said and gave a dry, angry laugh.

Auntie looked at this small woman with the amused, intelligent, resolute

face, the stubborn little chin, the dark shadow on her upper lip—and felt she belonged to some special, strange world, a world hard to understand, but a world which drew one.

She wanted to ask, "Are you a Social-Democrat?" but instead she embraced Pavlovskaya and cried impulsively, like a girl, "Oh, I do like you!"

"I don't know why," answered Pavlovskaya seriously, but it was clear that she liked Auntie too.

Evidently, Pavlovskaya had started off with a wrong impression of the Bachei family. She had thought them ordinary tenant farmers making money out of letting rooms and running the orchard, and they turned out to be naive, impractical people unable to cope with life and in bad trouble as a result.

The sense of strain disappeared and talk became easy. And although Pavlovskaya maintained her reserve, within five minutes Auntie's quick understanding had given her a fairly accurate picture of all that was happening round her.

She realized that these pickers Gavrik had brought from Near Mills were not just casual workers, but people united by common interests and, most surprising of all, well acquainted with the Pavlovskayas. And in all of this there seemed to be some mysterious significance.

DON'T KICK A MAN WHEN HE'S DOWN!

Petya and Marina strolled along a path in the garden, each pretending to be deep in thought, but actually not knowing what to say, or rather how to begin.

"Are you angry with me?" asked Marina, and as Petya remained morosely silent she cautiously scratched his sleeve. "Don't be angry," she said. "Better let's be friends. Shall we?"

Petya squinted down at her and scented a trick. She was trying to lure him into a declaration. She wanted him to say, "I don't believe in friendship between a man and a woman." And then she would catch him at once. Oh, no, my dear, that's an old game. I'm not so silly! And Petya remained silent.

"Why are you so quiet?" she asked, trying to see his face.

"There's nothing I can say to you," he answered in a significant tone. Let her understand it any way she liked. She sighed, then lowering her voice almost to a whisper she asked, "Have you been wanting to see me?"

"Have you?" asked Petya in his turn, not recognizing his own voice.

"Yes, I have," she answered and dropped her head so low that the cherries fell off her ears. She stopped and picked them up in some confusion.

"I even dreamed of you once," she said, blushing.

Petya could not believe his ears. "What's this," he thought in agitation. "Can this be a confession of love?" Petya had never even dared dream of such happiness. But now, when she shyly, truthfully told him she had wanted to see him, she had dreamed of him, Petya suddenly felt an enormous relief, even disappointment. Well, that was all right! Only a minute ago she had seemed inaccessible, and now she had become a nice but at the same time quite ordinary girl, not in the least like that Marina whom he had loved in such hopeless torment.

"Have you ever dreamed of me?" she asked.

Petya felt the decisive moment had come, the whole further course of the romance depended on his answer. If he said, "Yes," it was the same as a declaration of love. Where would he be then? He dreamed of her, she dreamed of him; he loved her, she loved him. Mutual love. The very thing he had wanted. Of course, it was very nice and all that, but wasn't it a little too soon? Just as things were getting interesting—there you were, all of a sudden—mutual love!

Of course, that would relieve Petya of all sorts of worry and trouble like sleepless nights, jealousy, or sitting in wet wormwood tossing notes in through a window. That was certainly a big advantage. But afterwards? Only one thing left—to kiss her. The very thought of that made Petya hot and uncomfortable.

No, no, anything you like, only not that!

But there stood Marina leaning against the ladder under a cherry tree, looking at him with darkened eyes and licking cracked lips that even looked hot, lips from which Petya could not tear his eyes.

"Why don't you answer?" she insisted, in the voice of a snake-charmer. "Did you dream of me?"

Again she was clearly gaining the upper hand. Another second and Petya would have submissively whispered, "Yes." But a spirit of doubt, of contradiction, triumphed.

"Strange as it may be, I haven't," said Petya with a strained, crooked smile which he imagined to be icy.

She dropped her Lashes and turned slightly pale.

"Aha, caught the wrong bird this time, my dear," thought Petya triumphantly.

He had no pity for her. Now, when he felt himself the conqueror, he already liked her less.

"Is that true?" She raised her eyes and with feigned interest examined the crown of the tree under which they were standing. Petya even thought he caught a faint smile as though she had seen something amusing there. But he was not to be caught by tricks like that.

"You see," said Petya, who was far from wanting to bring matters to a break, "it's not so much that I haven't seen you in dreams, but I've never dreamed of you."

"What do you mean?" she asked with interest and again smiled up into the tree, and even seemed to wink at it slyly.

"It's simple enough," Petya answered. "To see a person in a dream is one thing, to dream *of a* person is another. Can't you understand that? I could have seen you, you see all sorts of things in dreams. Plenty of them. But to dream specially of one person—that's something quite different."

"I don't understand," she said, biting her lip.

"I'll explain. To dream of a person, that's when ... well, how shall I put it... when, well, when you're in love, or whatever it is. You, for instance, have you ever loved anyone?" asked Petya sternly, up on his hobbyhorse.

"Yes. You," Marina answered quickly.

Petya frowned to hide his satisfaction.

"I don't believe in women's love," he answered with weary disillusion.

"You're wrong. And have you ever loved anyone?" she asked. She could not have found a question that would please him more. Like a silly mouse she came running into the trap so cleverly, insidiously set out by Petya.

"Questions of that kind are never answered," said Petya, "but I'll tell you, because I regard you as my friend. After all, we are friends, aren't we?"

"I don't believe in friendship between a man and a woman," said Marina.

"Well, I do!" said Petya in chagrin. She was beginning really to irritate him; she kept on saying just the things he ought to have said. Anyone would have thought she had never read a single love-story.

"You're wrong," she observed. "But I thought you had something to say to me?"

"I wanted to say—or rather, not say, to tell.... Well, say or tell, what does it matter. But of course, only to you as a friend, because nobody else knows or ever will know." Petya half turned from her and hung his head.-"I have loved,"

he said with a sad smile. "Or rather, I love now. But it is of no importance."

"And she?"

"Ah, even more than I love her! I love, but she is in love. And one day, just imagine it, we went out on the steppe to gather snowdrops. It was a lovely evening in spring—"

"I know," said Marina quickly. "It's Motya, isn't it?"

"How did you guess?"

"That doesn't matter. I did. Though I can't understand what you see in her," she added with a slight grimace. "Do you really love her?"

"It's queer, but I do," said Petya with a shrug. "I don't understand myself how it happened. There's nothing special about her, just a pretty face, but—there you are."

There was a rustle in the leaves above and a cherry stone fell, probably dropped by a starling.

"Shoo!" cried Petya, waving his arms.

"So that's it," said Marina jealously. "So you like going to the steppe for snowdrops? Well, and what happened there? I suppose you kissed her?"

"Questions like that are never answered," said Petya evasively.

"But I'm your friend so you've got to tell me everything. You've got to!" Marina cried with an angry stamp.

"Aha, jealous, are you, my dear?" thought Petya. "You wait, I've more for you yet!"

"Tell me this minute, did you kiss her or not? Or I'll go right away and you'll never see me again! You hear me? Never!" Her eyes flashed.

She was wonderfully pretty at the moment, and Petya with a careless shrug answered, "All right. Of course I kissed her."

"Oh, for shame, you little fibber!" That was Motya's voice from over their heads, and the next moment Motya herself, her face flushed, came sliding down and started hopping round Petya on one foot chanting, "I never thought you'd tell such fibs! I never thought you'd tell such fibs!"

"Oh, Motya, you're a wonder, how you ever kept from laughing too soon!" cried Marina, clapping her hands.

"I had to keep my hand over *my* mouth all the time!" Motya bubbled, still hopping round Petya. "Fib-ber! Fib-ber!"

Petya wished the earth would open and swallow him.

"So that was it?" said Marina menacingly. "So you kissed her, did you?" She went close up to Petya, with a quick, dexterous movement twisted a strand of his hair round her finger and gave it a good, hard tug.

"Ow! That hurts!" cried Petya.

"Didn't you hurt me?" said Marina.

Despite all the horror of his situation, Petya could not but appreciate that splendid answer, taken straight from Turgenev's *First Love.*

Suddenly Marina gave her mysterious, mermaid laugh and with feminine inconsequence said, "Listen, Motya, let's just give him a good beating!"

"Let's!" said Motya, and the two girls advanced on Petya with ominous laughter.

With a quick movement he twisted away from under their very hands and raced off at top speed, bare heels twinkling.

Off went the girls after him. He could hear their merry, mocking cries. They

were overtaking him. Then Petya decided on a well-known trick—to throw himself down right under the feet of his pursuers. He was in too great a hurry, however, he flopped down before the girls were close enough. And there he was, looking foolish on all fours, while the girls leisurely ran up, sat astride on him and started pummelling him.

It did not hurt particularly, but it was humiliating.

"Don't kick a man when he's down!" Petya groaned piteously.

Then with triumphant giggles they turned to tickling him. He squealed with helpless laughter. But just at the right moment Gavrik dropped from the skies to help his friend.

"Two to one's not fair! Rescue all!" he cried and flung himself down on the girls. "Come on all! Come on all!"

The summons immediately brought Pavlik, Zhenka and the boys and girls of Zhenka's gang, and in a few moments all that could be seen under the trees was a pile of heaving, panting, giggling, squealing bodies, arms and legs.

TERENTY SEMYONOVICH

That night Vasily Petrovich had slept like the dead— the heavy dreamless sleep of a tormented exhausted man, devoid of all thought or feeling.

It was late when he wakened, and for a long time he continued lying, eyes closed, face to the wall, unable to imagine what would happen to them all now.

At last he forced himself to rise, dress and go out into the orchard. There he saw piles of cherries on the sacks and matting spread out under the trees, and a great many people—some familiar, some strangers—standing on ladders or sitting on the branches, gathering the crop. He saw horses cropping the grass near two platforms. And finally he saw Auntie coming towards him with small energetic steps, smiling cheerfully.

"Well, Vasily Petrovich, everything's settled and it couldn't be better!"

"What do you mean?" he answered in a monotonous, expressionless voice. A faint smile appeared on his face, a strange fixed smile like that of a sleepwalker.

"Oh, good gracious, what else could I mean but our crop, our cherries!" Auntie answered gaily.

At the word "cherries" Vasily Petrovich started.

"No, no! For pity's sake," he groaned, "for pity's sake spare me all that—that torture."

"But listen a moment," said Auntie gently.

"I won't listen! I don't want to listen! Leave me alone! I'd sooner carry sacks at the port!" cried Vasily Petrovich desperately, and, turning, ran back into the house without looking hack, stumbling, waving his arms.

"Listen to me at least!" Auntie called after him.

He made no reply, he did not want to understand anything except that this must be another of Auntie's foolish ideas and they were now irretrievably ruined.

He lay down again on his bed, face to the wall, wanting one thing only—to be let alone.

Auntie did let him alone, she knew it was no good talking to him. So in two days everything was done, without Vasily Petrovich's participation.

Platforms drove away and drove back again. Horses snorted. Baskets creaked. In the evening camp-fires sparkled on the steppe and, together with the smoke, the wind brought an appetizing smell of stew and baked potatoes, and the sound of singing. All this made for a cheerful, almost festive atmosphere. And it was indeed a festival of gay, free work.

Vasily Petrovich, however, saw nothing of it, or rather, he refused to see anything. He was in the hopeless, desperate, tormented state of a trusting man who suddenly discovers that he has been grossly deceived. He realized that the

whole world had deceived him.

His world had been one of illusions. And the most dangerous of them had been his belief that he was a free man of independent mind. For in reality he, with all his splendid, lofty thoughts, his purity of spirit, his noble heart, with all his love for his country and his people, had been a mere slave, as much a slave as the millions of other Russians, a slave of the church, the state, and what was called "society." As soon as he made a feeble attempt to be honest and independent, the state poured its wrath upon him in the person of the official from the Education Department, "society," in the person of Faig; and when he tried to live by the labour of his hands so as to preserve his independence, to earn his bread in the sweat of his brow, he found that this too was impossible, because it did not happen to suit. Madame Storozhenko.

Most of the time Vasily Petrovich spent on his bed, but now he no longer turned his face to the wall, he lay on his back, his arms folded on his chest, staring at the ceiling with its play of green reflections from the orchard outside. His jaws were tightly clenched and angry furrows crossed his handsome forehead.

On the third day Auntie knocked at the door—softly but very decidedly.

"Vasily Petrovich, would you mind coming out for a minute?"

He jumped up and sat on the edge of the bed.

"What is it? What do you want?"

"Come on to the veranda."

"Why?"

"There's something important."

"Will you kindly spare me any important affairs whatsoever."

"All the same, I beg you to come."

Vasily Petrovich caught a new, serious note in Auntie's voice.

"Very well," he said dully. "Just a minute."

He tidied himself, put on his sandals, rinsed his face, smoothed his hair with a wet brush and went out, prepared for any trials or humiliations.

But instead of a bailiff, a policeman, a notary or something along those lines, he saw a stout man of middle age in a canvas jacket—apparently a workman, who held a piece of sugar in his teeth and was drinking tea "through" it from a saucer balanced on three fingers. Perspiration trickled down his red, pock-marked face, and judging by the warm smile with which Auntie regarded him, he was evidently a most admirable person.

"Ah, here you are, let me introduce you," Auntie said. "This is Terenty Semyonovich Chernoivanenko from Near Mills. You remember, Petya stayed with him, and our furniture's there."

"I'm Gavrik's brother, your Petya's friend," said Terenty. He carefully put down the saucer and held out his great hand to Vasily Petrovich. "Very glad to make your acquaintance. I've heard a lot about you."

"Really?" Vasily Petrovich said, seating himself at the table and unconsciously assuming his "teacher" pose with one leg flung over the other, his pince-nez on the black cord dangling from his hand. "Well, well, it would be interesting to hear exactly what it was you heard about me."

"Oh, just that first you couldn't get on with the authorities because of Count Tolstoi, and then you couldn't get on with Faig because of that blockhead Blizhensky," Terenty said with a sigh, "well, and all the rest of it. And of course,

you acted quite rightly and we respect you for it."

Vasily Petrovich pricked up his ears.

"And who are 'we'?" he asked.

Terenty laughed good-naturedly.

" 'We,' Vasily Petrovich, are ordinary working folk. The people, that is."

Vasily Petrovich's alertness increased. It all .smacked of "politics." With some uneasiness he looked at Auntie, because this, of course, must be her latest undertaking, and perhaps a dangerous one. But suddenly he saw a pile of paper money on the table—green three-ruble notes, blue fives and pink tens, neatly stacked and tied round with .thread.

"What's that money?" he asked.

"Just imagine," Auntie said with a modest smile of hidden triumph, "our early cherry crop's sold and this is what we've made."

"Six hundred and fifty-eight rubles clear profit!" Terenty added, rubbing his hands. "Now you'll be all right!"

"But just a moment," cried Vasily Petrovich, mistrusting his own eyes. "How did it all happen? The horses? The platforms? Our delivery? What? How?"

"That's simple," Terenty said. "Our firm is on a sound footing. For the right kind of people we can get hold of anything—horses, platforms, or packing. Because we're, well ... the proletariat. Everything is in our hands, Vasily Petrovich. Isn't that so?"

Although the word "proletariat" was one of the most dangerous, smelling not only of politics but even of revolution, Terenty spoke it so simply and naturally that Vasily Petrovich accepted it just as naturally, without the slightest inner protest.

"So it's you who arranged everything?" he said, putting on his pince-nez and looking at Terenty with renewed cheerfulness.

"Yes, we did it," Terenty answered with a shade of pride, and returned Vasily Petrovich's cheerful look.

"Our saviour!" said Auntie,

Then she told him in detail and with a good deal of humour about the sale of the cherries. They had been taken on platforms through the whole town and sold right from the platforms retail, and their success had been phenomenal. People grabbed them up, sometimes buying whole basketfuls—especially the white and pink ones; the black ones were less in demand.

"And just imagine," said Auntie, wrinkling her nose, her eyes sparkling, "our Pavlik was the best salesman of all."

"What?" Vasily Petrovich frowned. "Pavlik sold cherries?"

"Of course," Auntie said, "we all did. Do you think I didn't sell them too? I most certainly did. I put on an old hat *a la* Madame Storozhenko, sat on the box by the driver, and drove in triumph along all the streets. Well, and how could I stop the children after that? They all sold cherries—Petya and Motya and Marina and little Zhenya."

"Wait a moment," Vasily Petrovich said sternly. "Did my children sell cherries in the streets? I think I can't have understood you properly."

"Oh, good gracious, there's nothing to understand. They sat on the platforms and drove along the streets shouting, 'Cherries! Cherries!' Somebody had to do the shouting. Just think how they enjoyed it! But Pavlik, Pavlik! He really amazed me. He shouted better than any of the others. I'd never thought. You

know, he's got a voice just like- Sobinov's. And such an artistic manner, and the most important thing—a real understanding of the customer! He always knew how to treat them, when to insist on a high price and when to lower it a bit."

"Oh, this is outrageous!" muttered Vasily Petrovich and was just preparing to be really angry when he suddenly seemed to hear his Pavlik calling out in a voice like Sobinov's, "Cherries! Cherries!" and an involuntary smile slipped under his moustache. He snatched his pince-nez off and sat back with his benevolent teacher's "He-he-he!" It did not last long, however, in a moment he was frowning again.

"It's not really very funny, though," he said with a sigh. "If anything, it's sad. But it's a true saying: When in Rome, do as the Romans do."

"That's true," Terenty said, "but it's not all the truth. You mustn't just do as the Romans do, you must fight them. Or they'll gobble you up so there's nothing left. Take that old bitch Madame Storozhenko—excuse the language, but it's the only name for her—she almost swallowed you whole. A good thing we managed to get here in time."

"Yes," said Vasily Petrovich, "I don't know how to thank you. You've literally saved us from ruin. Thank you! Thank you from the bottom of my heart!"

"Fine words butter no parsnips," said Terenty with a grin.

Vasily Petrovich looked at Auntie in some perplexity. He did not know what to do next. Ought he to offer Terenty money? But Terenty evidently guessed his thought.

"Nay, it's not money I mean," he said. "We helped you out, well, just to be neighbourly. From a feeling of solidarity. And, of course, not to let a good man down. Now we want you to help us a bit."

Terenty kept using the word "we," but for some reason it no longer alarmed Vasily Petrovich.

"How can I help you?" he asked with interest.

"This way." Terenty took out a folded handkerchief and wiped his big, kindly face and round cropped head with the satiny-white soar on the temple. "We've got a small study circle, a sort of Sunday school. We read various pamphlets, books, and newspapers, and so far as we can, we study political economy. Well, that's all right as far as it goes," and Terenty sighed, "but it doesn't go far enough. Vasily Petrovich, we're short of general knowledge. You know—history, geography ... how life began in the world ... that sort of thing. Now, how do you look at that?"

"You mean, you want me to read some popular lectures?" Vasily Petrovich asked.

"That's exactly it. Yes, and a bit of Russian literature wouldn't do any harm either. Pushkin, Gogol, Count Tolstoi. ... In general, whatever you think is needed, you know more about that. And in return we'll help you with the orchard. The early cherries are all sold, but there are still the late cherries, and apples, and pears. And you've a vineyard too. Not very big, but it'll take a good bit of work. You'll never manage it all by yourselves. So that's the idea, you help us and we'll help you."

Vasily Petrovich had already resigned himself to the thought that his educational activities were over, and now such a blaze of joy flared up in him that for a moment he could hardly master himself. He even rubbed his hands and

flashed his pince-nez in his old class-room manner, .saying, "Well, well...." But with the memory of the trouble and humiliation connected with his former work, his enthusiasm quickly died out.

"Ah, no," he said, "no, no! Anything but that! I've had enough." His face bore an imploring look and he cracked his fingers. "For pity's sake not that! I vowed to myself. And what sort of teacher am I if they've driven me out from everywhere?" he concluded bitterly.

"Why, Vasily Petrovich, how can you talk like that!" cried Auntie, horrified.

"They didn't drive you out, they tried to gobble you up," Terenty said. "You stuck in the throat of those gentry, so they just tried to get you out of the way. It's as Simple as that. We stick in their throats too, but they can't get rid of us. We're too tough. They couldn't settle us properly in 1905, and now, in 1912, they don't have a chance. And you want to deny it!" he added reproachfully, although Vasily Petrovich had said nothing, only stared at Terenty, trying to find the connection between 1905, 1912 and his own fate which had worked out so dreadfully.

"No," he said at last, but with less resolution. "All you say may be right to a certain extent, but it doesn't make it any easier for me." He was just going to add that he would rather go to the port and carry sacks, but for some reason stopped himself, thrust his beard forward and said, "And that's that."

"All right," Terenty said, "have it your own way. But I think you're making a mistake. Where's the sense of it if a teacher stops teaching? Why should you stop? What's it matter that you couldn't agree with that blockhead of an official and that shark Faig? They're not the people. The people are still very ignorant, you know it yourself. They need light, knowledge. The working class lacks educated people. And where can we find them, when we haven't the means? Who can help us as you can? We've helped you, you help us. We've got to be neighbourly, Vasily Petrovich. It's not far from us to you. The same proletariat. It's only two miles from here to Near Mills, across the steppe as the crow flies. Well, what about it?" Terenty bent a warm look on Vasily Petrovich. "You won't have to come to us. We'll come ourselves, if you agree; on Saturday evenings after work, or on Sundays. We'll earth up your trees and water the orchard and work in the vineyard, and then you'll teach us a bit after. Out in the open air, under the trees, on the grass or somewhere on the steppe, in -some quiet spot—that would really be fine. Especially as the police have been giving us no peace at all in Near Mills lately. As soon as folks get together anywhere to talk or read books—there's a raid, a search, a fuss—and come to the police-station. But this is ideal. Even if they should come it is all plain and clear—folks working in an orchard, the most ordinary thing in the world."

Terenty talked gently, almost tenderly, respectfully, now and then just touching Vasily Petrovich's sleeve with two fingers as softly as though he were removing a wisp of down. And the more he talked, the more that idea of lessons under the sky, in the open air, appealed to Vasily Petrovich. It was just the thing that had been lacking—free enlightenment inspired by free physical labour.

While Terenty was still talking, Vasily Petrovich made a mental plan of his first lectures. He would begin, of course, with a popular outline of general history and physical geography—perhaps to be followed by astronomy.

"Well, Vasily Petrovich, what about it? Do you agree?" Terenty asked.

"Yes, I do," Vasily Petrovich answered decidedly.

That day Auntie went to town, made the payment, and a new life started at the farm.

GLOW-WORMS

For five days of the week everything went on as before. The Bacheis continued to work in the sweat of their brow, earthing up and watering late cherry and apple trees. The only change was that now the Pavlovskayas sometimes joined them.

Petya and Marina had slipped into friendly, somewhat dull, neighbourly terms. Nevertheless—more from habit than anything else—he would sometimes look volumes at her to which she usually replied by unobtrusively putting out her tongue.

Every Saturday afternoon, however, a whole procession would arrive from Near Mills. Motya, Gavrik and Zhenka came, then tall, thin Sinichkin carrying his spade carefully wrapped in newspaper under his arms. The old railwayman with his lamp whom Petya knew from Near Mills and Uncle Fedya would come striding .along in step like soldiers, Uncle Fedya with a big copper kettle in his hand and a large, flat loaf of bread under his arm.

The young schoolmistress would come running from the horse-tram terminus, clasping a few dog-eared pamphlets to her breast.

There were others of Terenty's Sunday guests, workers whom Petya had often seen in the streets, the workshops or the gardens when he lived in Near Mills.

Terenty himself usually came last. He would throw off his boots and jacket, place them neatly under a tree and at once take charge.

"Well, folks, time to stop smoking and get to work."

He distributed the jobs quickly; some people he sent to help with the earthing, others to weed, or bring water from the cistern, or water the trees, or work in the vineyard. Then he would take a spade or hoe and start himself.

They worked for only a couple of hours or so, but got through more than the Bacheis had done in a week. Then all went to the sea for a bathe, returned refreshed, sat down soberly in a circle under the trees, and Terenty went to fetch Vasily Petrovich.

"Certainly, I'm quite ready," he invariably replied, coming out on the veranda in a freshly-ironed tussore jacket, starched shirt with a black tie, and pointed kid boots.

He approached the group with his springy teacher's step, erect and severe, carrying under his arm an exercise book containing the outline of his lecture which he had been preparing for several days; Terenty respectfully brought a chair from the veranda and placed it for him.

When Vasily Petrovich appeared, the "pupils" wanted to rise, but with a quick movement he gestured to them to remain seated, refused the chair and himself sat down on the grass as though stressing the special, free, unofficial nature of the studies.

It should be added that this was the only freedom Vasily Petrovich permitted himself. In nothing else did he deviate a hair's breadth from the strictest academic tradition.

"Well," he would say, glancing down at his notes, "last time we discussed the life of primitive man who already knew how to make fire, who hunted with the aid of crude weapons of stone, but who had not yet learned to cultivate the land or to sow grain...."

Petya, who sometimes joined the circle, discovered a new father—not the ordinary, domestic Dad—dear, kind and sometimes unhappy, but a capable teacher presenting his subject in a clear, logical sequence.

Petya had never realized his father had such a fine, ringing voice, or that mature working men could listen to him with such childlike attention. Petya noticed that they even stood a little in awe of him. Once Uncle Fedya forgot where he was and lighted a cigarette. Then Vasily Petrovich stopped in the middle of a sentence and fixed such an icy look upon the culprit that he crushed out the cigarette in his palm, flushed crimson, jumped to his feet, and standing to attention with bulging eyes jerked out navy-fashion, "Excuse me, Comrade Lecturer! Won't happen again!"

"Sit down," said Vasily Petrovich coldly and took up his lecture exactly where he had broken off.

Behind his back Terenty shook his fist at Uncle Fedya, and Petya realized that his father not only himself took a pride in his profession, but made others respect it too.

Usually they all spent the night with the Bacheis, rising early to work, so they cooked their supper immediately after the lecture to get to sleep in good time.

A fire was lighted beside the twig-and-weed shanties, and a great cauldron of potato-and-pork stew was hung over it. Night fell; the darkness under the trees became so intense that from the distance it looked as though the fire was burning in the mouth of a cave. Black shadowy forms moved round it; they were gigantic and it seemed that their heads could touch the stars. It all reminded Petya of a gipsy camp.

When the stew was ready, Terenty would go to the house to invite Vasily Petrovich to join them.

In a few moments he would appear, this time in domestic garb—an old Russian shirt and sandals on his bare feet. Someone would hand him a wooden spoon and, squatting down, he would eat the rather smoky stew with evident relish and praise it highly.

Then they would drink tea, also smoky, and eat rye bread. Sometimes fishermen from Bolshoi Fontan whom Terenty knew would join them, bringing fresh fish. On those occasions supper would continue until long past midnight. Gradually the talk would turn to political subjects—at first- cautiously, in veiled-words, then with increasing frankness, with such a vigour of expression that Vasily Petrovich would produce a yawn, stretch himself, rise and say, "Well, I won't trouble you any further. Thank you for the supper, but now I'm for bed. And I advise you to get some sleep too. The stew was really incomparable."

Nobody urged him to stay. They would put out the fire and gather in Terenty's shanty, light the railway lantern and continue their talk—but it was talk of a different nature. Pavlovskaya would join them, bringing along a thick, worn, cloth-bound book. Petya knew that now they would read Karl Marx's *Capital*

and the latest issue of the *Pravda,* and after that they would discuss Party affairs.

This, however, was not for Petya's ears, not even for Gavrik's. Their job was to walk all round the orchard and the house, keeping an eye on the steppe and especially on the roads. If they saw anything suspicious, they were to give the alarm by firing the shot-gun. But who could appear in the middle of the night on the steppe, so far from town? Who could ever think that an innocent orchard concealed a small shanty lighted by a railway lantern where eight or ten workmen and fishermen were discussing the destiny of Russia, the destiny of the world, drawing up leaflets, discussing Party matters and preparing for revolution.

Petya and Gavrik, however, did their duty conscientiously. Petya carried the old shot-gun they used for scaring birds slung over his shoulder, while Gavrik now and then slipped his right hand into a pocket to touch a loaded Browning of which Petya knew nothing.

At first the girls would go round with them, for company. Marina, of course, knew what it was all about, but Motya innocently thought they were guarding the orchard against thieves, and followed Petya on tiptoe, never taking her eyes off the shot-gun.

She was no longer angry with him for being such a little liar, she even loved him more, especially now when it was so quiet, dark and mysterious all round, when sleep had laid its hand on everything but the quails and the crickets, when the whole steppe lay silvery in the starlight.

"Petya, aren't you even a bit afraid of thieves?" she whispered, but Petya pretended not to have heard.

He was not in the mood for love. And altogether, he had vowed to himself to have no more dealings with girls. He'd had enough! Better to be a lone, brave, taciturn man for whom women do not exist.

He gazed intently out on the empty steppe, ears pricked for the slightest sound. But Motya tiptoed after him and asked, "Petya, if you see a thief will you shoot him?"

"Of course," Petya answered.

"Then I'll stop up my ears," Motya whispered, faint with fear and love.

"Let me alone!"

She said no more, but in a little while Petya heard a queer sound behind him, like a cat sneezing. It was Motya's stifled giggle.

"What are you sniggering about?"

"Remember that time Marina and I fooled you?"

"Idiot! It was I that fooled you both," Petya growled.

"You let your imagination run away with you," said Marina in her mother's voice. During these nocturnal strolls she was very quiet, reserved, adult, said little and walked beside Gavrik, even taking his arm sometimes. And although that did give Petya a pang of jealousy, he continued resolutely in his role of a man for whom love does not exist.

But alas, love did exist, the whole warm night on the steppe seemed filled with it. It was in everything—the dark sky, thick with summer star-dust, the crystal choir of crickets, the gentle, warm, scented breeze, the distant barking of a dog, and especially the glow-worms that seemed like fires in the far distance, yet you need but stretch out your hand and the soft, weightless little lamp lay on your palm shedding its dead green light on a tiny patch of skin.

The girls collected glow-worms and put them in each other's hair. Then they began to yawn and soon afterwards went to their shanty, floating away through the darkness like twin constellations.

Gavrik and Petya continued to guard the camp alone until the light disappeared in Terenty's shanty. Sometimes this was only when dawn was breaking.

In those early morning hours Gavrik talked with unusual frankness, and Petya learned much that was new to him. He understood now that a new, - powerful revolutionary movement had already begun, and that it was led by Ulyanov-Lenin who, Gavrik said, had moved from Paris to Cracow to be closer to Russia.

"And do you think it'll really come—revolution?" asked Petya, pronouncing the dreadful word with an effort.

"I don't just think it, I'm sure of it," Gavrik answered and added in a whisper, "If you want to know, it's already—"

Petya waited breathlessly for what Gavrik would say next. But Gavrik said nothing, he. could not find the words for all he had sensed or heard from Terenty. But Petya understood. The Lena shooting. The strikes. The meeting on the steppe. The *Pravda*. The fight with that bully. Prague. Cracow. Lenin. And finally this night, that lantern in the shanty. What else was it all but a herald of the mounting tide of revolution?

MOUSTACHE

Soon the late cherries ripened. There were fewer trees this time but no less bother.

At the height of the picking Madame Storozhenko suddenly appeared. This time she did not enter but had the britzka stop at the far side of the scrub-grown earth bank that marked the boundary. For a long time she stood on the step, steadying herself with a hand on the head of one of the Persians, watching the work.

"Ragamuffins, scamps, proletarians!" she kept screaming, shaking her big canvas sunshade threateningly. "I'll teach you to go forcing prices down! I'll have the police on you!"

Nobody took any notice and she finally drove away, with a parting yell, "I'll put a stop to your tricks, so help me God!"

The next day platforms came for the cherries. While they were still out on the steppe, a little distance from the orchard, Petya saw some heavy boxes thrown off them which afterwards disappeared.

"What boxes were those?" he asked.

"I thought you were asleep," Gavrik replied, evidently none too pleased. He ignored Petya's question.

"No, but seriously, what were those boxes?"

"What boxes?" Gavrik drawled, with a look of innocence. "Where'd you see any boxes? There aren't any!"

But Petya had seen them plainly enough.

"Don't play the fool!" he snapped angrily.

Gavrik came and stood in front of him, legs apart.

"Forget them," he said sternly. But there was such mysterious triumph in his face, such a sly gleam in his eye that Petya's curiosity only flamed higher.

"Tell me—what were they?" he said again. He knew full well that their contents was some important secret, and that Gavrik was aching to boast about it. "Well?" he said insistently.

Then Gavrik brought his face up close, hesitated a moment, and after looking all round said in a whisper, "A flat press."

Petya could not believe his ears.

"What?" he said.

"A flat press for printing," Gavrik said very distinctly. "Don't you understand? Dunderhead!"

Dozens of times Petya had passed that little gully on the steppe, thick with tall weeds, without noticing anything special about it. But when he looked at it

this time he saw the weeds at the bottom stir and two figures climb out—first Uncle Fedya and then the old railwayman. Now Petya understood it all. There must be a cave in the rocks at the bottom of the gully, there were many of these caves all round the city, opening on to the steppe or among the cliffs, and Petya knew they were the entrances to the famous Odessa catacombs. So that was where the boxes had gone!

"Get it?" said Gavrik and gave Petya such a keen, almost menacing look that the boy was just about to pronounce some solemn vow when he caught himself up, and returning Gavrik's look, said merely, "Yes. I got it."

"I hope you do," said Gavrik. "And remember, you've seen nothing. Forget it all."

"I know," Petya said, and they both went unhurriedly to the orchard where the cherries were being poured out in piles on the platform.

Next morning Terenty reappeared on the veranda and put some money on the table.

"You see how well it works out," he said. "You help us, we help you. There's a hundred and seventeen here, and we kept back fifteen rubles for small expenses. I hope you don't object?"

"Oh, of course not, of course not," Vasily Petrovich said.

He never suspected that these "fifteen rubles for small expenses" had been sent that very day to St. Petersburg, and that in a week's time the list of acknowledgements of cash received in the *Pravda* would include a line that read, "From a group of Odessa workers, 15 rubles."

That was how the cherry crop was marketed.

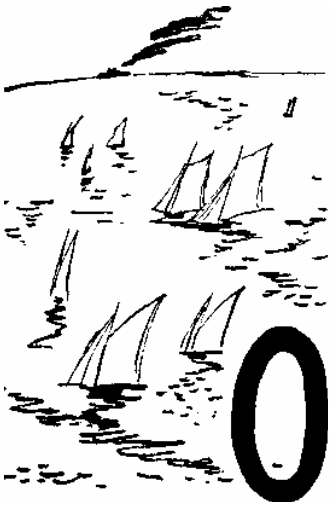
The next thing would be the early apples. The summer was passing quietly, everything was going well—except for a small incident which passed unnoticed by all but Petya, on whom it left an unpleasant impression. . As he neared the orchard one day after a bathe he saw a man coming out of the gate. There was something familiar about him. Moved by an inexplicable sense of danger, Petya slipped quietly into the maize field and squatted down among the thick stems and rustling leaves. The man passed so close that Petya could have reached out and touched his dusty serge trousers and grey canvas shoes. He looked up and saw against the bright blue sky and marble clouds a head in a summer cap of loofah with two peaks—in front and at the back—the kind of cap dubbed "Hullo—Good-bye!"; he saw the grey moustache and pince-nez of dark glass like those worn by the blind. It was Moustache, the secret police spy whose face had been imprinted on Petya's mind as a child, on the *Turgenev,* and whom he had seen again just before his trip abroad, standing with a coastguard officer on board the *Palermo.*

The man passed without noticing Petya, his bluely shaved cheeks puffed out, trumpeting softly a popular march.

Petya waited a little while and then hurried home to find out what this man had come for. But he got little satisfaction. According to Auntie, it was a summer resident from Bolshoi Fontan who had simply come for cherries; Auntie had told him she was sorry but he was too late. He had walked round the orchard, praised it and said he would most certainly come back in September when the grapes were ripe. That was all. As it was the middle of the week only the family had been there, and. Petya felt easier in his mind. Perhaps the man really was staying at Bolshoi Fontan for the summer and really had come only

for cherries. After all, he was a human being, why shouldn't he have a summer cottage at Bolshoi Fontan?

Gavrik, however, took it much more seriously, although he agreed that it might be mere chance". To be on the safe side, Terenty increased the sentries, and Gavrik and Petya paced the steppe not only on Saturday nights but during the day as well. It was evidently a false alarm, however, for the man did not appear again.



THE SAIL

One Saturday at the beginning of August Petya and Gavrik, after circling round the orchard a few times and seeing nothing suspicious, went to the cliffs, lay down and gazed out to sea. The sun had only just set, there was a brisk wind and the glow was fading from the pink clouds. Dolphins played not far from the shore, and on the horizon the white sails of scows stood out against the sky, for it was the mackerel fishing season.

The scows moved in various directions and frequently changed their course, now approaching, now withdrawing. Sometimes one of them would come quite close and pass, tossing, along the coast; then the two could see the fountains of spray as its flat bottom slapped the water, and the man standing on the battered bow moving a long rod, bent like a bow, backward and forward. The boys knew that at the end of the long line was a bait—brightly painted fish of lead with a multitude of sharp hooks. The great art of this kind of fishing was to adapt the speed of the bait to the movement of the shoal. The rapacious mackerel would start to pursue the shining bait and it must not be pulled too far ahead or made too easy to seize. The fisherman must tantalize the fish before letting it snap, then it would be firmly caught.

It was interesting to watch, but Petya and Gavrik were thinking of something else. They watched the sails, trying to guess which was the one they awaited.

In addition to the fishing boats they could see far out the smart white sails of the racing yachts of the fashionable clubs on the last lap of the annual handicap for the prize offered by the Odessa millionaire Anatre. They were just racing for the finish, leaning over sharply with the wind—lovely vessels built at the best wharves of Holland and Britain. At any other time, of course, Petya and Gavrik would have had eyes for nothing else, but now Gavrik only remarked contentedly, "It's like Saturday evening on Deribasovskaya Street. Crowded. Easy to slip through."

"I believe it's that one, look, with the old 'Bolshoi Fontan lighthouse on her beam," said Petya, pronouncing the words "on her beam" with special satisfaction.

"No," said Gavrik, "Akim Perepelitsky's scow is bright blue, only just painted, and this is all scaled off!"

"I believe you're right."

"I certainly am." "Look! There she is!" –

"Where?"

"Opposite Golden Shore, a bit closer, look, bright blue!"

"It's got a new jib, Perepelitsky's is patched."

"When did they say they'd come?"

"When the sun sets."

"It's set now."

"It's still too light. Needs to get a bit darker first."

"Maybe they won't come at all?"

"Rubbish. This is Party work."

The boys went on staring intently out to sea.

Only a little while before a representative of the Central Committee had come to Odessa secretly from abroad, from Ulyanov-Lenin, bringing the Party directives regarding the elections to the Fourth State Duma. For a week now he had been going everywhere addressing Party meetings about the political situation. Now he was expected at the farm. As *a* precautionary measure a young-fisherman, Akim Perepelitsky, was to bring him on his fishing boat from Langeron.

The light faded from the clouds, the sea darkened. The yachts passed and disappeared. The sails of fishing boats became noticeably fewer. A band was playing far away, in Arcadia, and the wind brought the distant music of trumpets and the dull thud of a drum. And still Akim Perepelitsky's scow did not appear.

Suddenly Gavrik cried, "Look, there it is!"

It was not at all where they had expected it to appear —instead of coming from the Langeron side, it appeared from near to Lustdorf. Evidently Akim Perepelitsky thought it safer to keep far out to sea until he was opposite Lustdorf and then turned back to Kovalevsky's dacha. Now the scow was quite close in, leaping from wave to wave before a brisk wind, making straight for the shore.

There were two men in it. The one lying back in the stern with the tiller under his arm was Akim Perepelitsky, Petya knew him at once. The other—short and thickset, in an old, striped singlet under a fisherman's canvas coat, barefoot, trousers rolled to his knees—was sitting astride the side of the boat, skilfully unlashing the jib-sheet. This man Petya did not immediately recognize.

While the boys raced down the cliff path the sails were furled, the rudder taken in and dropped in the stern, the keel raised and the scow grounded gently, the bottom scraping the pebbles as it buried its nose in the shingle.

Following the unwritten law of the coast, Petya and Gavrik first helped to pull the heavy boat ashore, and then greeted the arrivals.

"Gosh! It's Uncle Zhukov!" cried Gavrik like a child, shaking hands vigorously with the Central Committee" representative. "I knew it! I was sure it was you coming!"

Zhukov looked at Gavrik for a moment. "Aha!" he said at last. "Now I know you too. Wasn't it you who pulled me out of the water opposite Otrada Villa seven years ago? Look how you've shot up! I'm sorry about your grandad.... Aye, he was a good old man, I liked him! Well, may his soul rest in peace. I remember how he kept praying to St. Nicholas, not that he ever got anywhere by it...." A shadow from past memories passed over Rodion Zhukov's face.

"What's your name, by the way? I'm afraid I've forgotten."

"Gavrik. Gavrik Chernoivanenko."

"Chernoivanenko? Any relation to Terenty?"

"Yes, I'm his brother."

"You don't say! And following in his footsteps, I see." "Uncle Zhukov, I know you too," Petya put in plaintively, tired of seeing the attention of the Central Committee representative concentrated on Gavrik alone. "I knew you

even before he did. When you hid in the coach, remember? And then on the *Turgenev."*

"Well, of all things!" cried Zhukov merrily. "So it looks as if we're old friends, too, if you're telling the truth."

"I am, I swear it," cried Petya and crossed himself. "Gavrik can tell you. Gavrik, tell him how I carried cartridges to Alexandrovsky Street!"

"It's right, he did," said Gavrik.

"And I saw you in Naples a year ago. You were with Maxim Gorky. Isn't that right?"

Zhukov looked at Petya.

"Yes, it's right," he said. "I remember you now. You were in a sailor's blouse, weren't you?"

"Yes," Petya said and looked at Gavrik in triumph.

"See?"

"Only there's one thing, lads," said Zhukov sternly.

"Forget that I was ever called Uncle Zhukov. That's gone. I'm Vasilyev now. Don't forget. What's my name?"

"Vasilyev," the boys said in one voice.

"Remember, then.... Well, and what's your name?" he asked, turning to Petya.

"Petya."

"He's that teacher's son," Gavrik amplified.

"I guessed it," said Zhukov, thought for a moment and added decisively, "well, don't let's waste time. Let's go. Have they all come?"

"Long ago," Gavrik answered.

"All clear along the way? I gave them my word in Cracow that I'd be as prudent as a young lady."

"Yes, it's all clear," Gavrik said.

Rodion Zhukov took a round basket of mackerel from the scow and put it on his head, like any fisherman taking his catch to sell at the villa doors.

"A good catch," said Gavrik with respect.

"A whole basket in one go and with one silver bait," laughed Zhukov, with a wink at Akim Perepelitsky. Handsome young Akim with a forelock falling over his forehead swung the oars with lazy grace on to his shoulder and they began to climb the cliff path.

Gavrik went about fifty paces in front of the two men, Petya the same distance behind them; if either of them noticed anything suspicious he was to whistle through his fingers. Petya held his fingers ready, worried by a foolish fear that if he needed to whistle, he might suddenly be unable to make a sound. Everything was quiet, however, and avoiding the road, they made their way to the orchard where Terenty met them by the vineyard. Petya saw them hug each other with many enthusiastic slaps on the back, and then go to the shanties where a fire was already crackling under the trees, sending out showers of golden sparks.

When Petya went up to the shanties a little later, Rodion Zhukov, smoking a short pipe with a metal lid, was sitting before the fire, surrounded by a group of people.

"Let's review the events that have taken place in the six months since the Prague Conference, comrades," he was saying. "In the first place, the Party exists

again. That is the main thing. I don't need to tell you how this was done, what tremendous difficulties -we had to overcome. There was the rabid persecution by the tsarist police, the failures, the provocation, the incessant interruptions in the work of the local centres and the Central Committee. But now that's all past, thank heaven. Our Party's going ahead boldly, confidently, broadening its activities and increasing its influence among the masses. Not in the old way, but in the new way. What was left to us after the defeat of the 1905 Revolution? Illegal activities, nothing else. But now in addition to our illegal cells, our secret little groups even more carefully concealed than before, we have broader, legal Marxist teaching. It is this combination of legal and illegal that characterizes our preparations for revolution under the new conditions. We are advancing to a new .revolution, comrades, under slogans of a democratic republic, an eight-hour working day and complete confiscation of all the big estates. You know that these slogans have been caught up over the whole of Russia. They have been accepted by all the thinking proletariat. To put it briefly, we've stopped the retreat. Stolypin's liberal counter-revolution is on its last legs. There are more strikes, mere uprisings. This is a revolutionary movement of the masses, it is the beginning of the offensive of the working masses against the tsarist monarchy."

Petya never took his eyes off Rodion Zhukov, off that face lighted by the leaping, crackling flames of the fire. He was no longer the Zhukov Petya had seen as a child and had never forgotten. Nor was it the Zhukov he had seen in Naples, nor even the Zhukov who had just walked barefoot over the steppe with the round basket of fish on his head. It was a new Zhukov—Comrade Vasiilyev, exacting, almost stern, with narrowed, imperative eyes, a firm mouth and short moustache clipped a foreign way. It was the sailor who had become a captain.

"Now let's talk about the elections to the Fourth State Duma," Zhukov went on. "Despite persecution and mass arrests, the Russian Social-Democratic Party now has a clearer, more definite programme and tactics than any other party. This is how Vladimir Lenin-Ulyanov, writing in the *Workers' Paper,* formulated the situation on the eve of the elections...."

Gavrik tugged at Petya's sleeve.

"What are you sitting here for, as if you've nothing to do?" he whispered. "We've got to keep watch."

Petya slipped quietly out of the circle, and suddenly saw his father. Vasily Petrovich stood leaning against a tree, arms folded, listening so intently to Rodion Zhukov that he did not even turn his head when Petya jolted his shoulder in passing. His hair fell in disorder over his lined forehead and a tiny reflected fire sparkled in each glass of his pince-nez.

AT THE CAMP-FIRE

Petya and Gavrik circled the orchard and turned on to the road leading to the terminus. The old horse-tram had recently been replaced by an electric tram; its deep cello note came to them from the distance, a blue electric spark travelled along the wire past the gardens, and the bright light from the windows made the steppe seem still darker. Suddenly Gavrik stopped and gripped Petya's arm. A number of white figures were walking along the side of the road in single file, making straight for the Bacheis' orchard. Before Gavrik had time to whisper, "Police!" Petya distinguished the white summer tunics. The boys raced breathlessly back to the fire.

"The Liquidators shout about a decent, licensed platform for the elections. But we Bolsheviks consider that what's needed isn't a platform for the elections, but elections for carrying out a revolutionary Social-Democratic platform. We have already used the elections for this and we shall continue using them, we shall use even the most reactionary tsarist Duma for revolutionary teaching, agitation, propaganda. That's how it is!"

Rodion Zhukov coughed angrily and reached out to the fire for an ember to relight his pipe; at that moment Gavrik whispered to Terenty who raised his hand without getting up.

"Just a minute, comrades. A point of order," he said in a quiet, almost business-like tone. "First of all please preserve absolute calm and revolutionary self-control. We're surrounded by police."

Petya expected everyone to jump up and seize weapons. He pulled his shot-gun off his shoulder—he had not had time to fire it as they ran back to the farm. Now it's going to start, he thought, fearful yet thrilled.

To his great surprise, however, all remained sitting quietly round the fire. Only Rodion Zhukov with a sharp movement knocked out his pipe on the ground and slipped it into his pocket.

"All stop where you are; you, Rodion, and you, Tamara," Terenty turned to Pavlovskaya, "will have to hide for a little while. We've got a good place not far from here. Gavrik, off you go! Take our illegal workers to the gully. They can sit it out there."

"Damn them, they interrupted us at the most important point," said Rodion Zhukov gaily. "Well, comrades, here you've got a splendid instance of our tactics—the combination of legal and illegal." His eyes flashed mischievously yet somehow menacingly in the light of the fire.

"Go on, go on underground," said Terenty impatiently.

Pavlovskaya and Zhukov followed Gavrik, passing beneath the trees and disappearing into the darkness. A slight shadow that was Marina slipped after them. Petya made to follow her, gripping his shot-gun, but Terenty shook his finger in warning and he halted. Everything happened quickly and quietly, without any stir. When the police officer with three of his men followed Moustache into the orchard, trying to step quietly and keep their sabres from rattling, they found a picture of perfect peace—a group of people sitting by a camp-fire quietly eating supper.

"Who are you? What's the reason for this assembly?" the officer asked sternly, advancing out of the darkness. Without a doubt he expected his appearance to be as startling as a clap of thunder. But they went quietly on with their supper, only the old railwayman carefully licked his wooden spoon clean, wiped it on his trousers and held it out to the officer saying, "You're welcome to join us, to have a bite of supper. Akim, move over a bit, so there's room for His Honour to sit down."

"Nay, what's the good of that," drawled Akim Perepelitsky lazily. "They've got a whole squad, our stew'll not go round them all. They'd best go back to the station and eat their prison skilly."

"Get up!" snapped the officer. "Who d'you think you're talking to?"

"No need to be so free, Your Honour, we haven't tended pigs together," drawled Akim more lazily still, raised himself on his elbow and spat in the fire.

"Ugh—rabble!" said the officer viciously, blowing his reddish moustache and wrinkling his fleshy nose. "You— I'll make you...."

Meanwhile, the policemen stood in the darkness under the trees, ready at any moment to seize anyone they could lay hands on, although what was happening was very different from what they had expected.

They had thought they would catch dangerous bomb-throwers red-handed, that they would have to use their sabres and perhaps fire-arms too. But instead of that, this man with the moustache had brought them to an orchard where people sat round a camp-fire peacefully eating their supper and not only showed no fear of the police but even talked impertinently to the officer. It looked as though they'd come on a fool's errand.

"My good sir, I haven't the honour of knowing who you are," said Vasily Petrovich in a voice trembling with indignation, drawing himself up to his full height and coming up close to the officer. "What do you want here? By what right do you break into this orchard? And— and—and interrupt people having their supper," he added, his beard shaking.

"And who might you be?" asked the officer sternly.

"I not only *might be, I am* the tenant and full master here, on a fully legal agreement," said Vasily Petrovich, assuming a lofty schoolroom manner. "These are my labourers ... seasonal labourers, if the term pleases you better, whom I hired to work in the garden and vineyard." (Terenty nodded approvingly.) "I am Councillor Bachei, and I won't stand any trespassing on my grounds at night!" he cried, his voice rising to a shout, and he stamped his sandaled foot angrily.

"Excuse me, we are not trespassing, we are the police," said the officer, falling back a step.

"To me you are trespassing!" Vasily Petrovich shouted. "I wish to have nothing to do with you. Why do you persecute me? Great heavens," and his

voice became plaintive. "When will it all end? First it was that official, then Faig, then Madame Storozhenko. And now the police. Leave me alone!" he yelled, beside himself. "Let me live in peace! Lea-ve m-ee a-lo-ne! Or I'll lodge a complaint—with the Governor, with Major-General Tolmachov!"

Strange as it might seem, his confused speech produced a decided impression on the officer, especially the mention of Tolmachov. After all, who could say what he was, this Bachei? Suppose he really did complain to General Tolmachov?

"You don't need to raise your voice," said the officer, more in expostulation than threat, and went over to Moustache who had been sauntering about in the darkness under the trees, carefully looking over all the men round the fire, one after the other. The officer whispered to him, coughed, and turned back to Vasily Petrovich.

"We have information that various illegal assemblages are constantly held here, that banned pamphlets are read and—well, that people assemble. And all assemblages are at present strictly forbidden."

"But, Your Honour," said Akim Perepelitsky insinuatingly, "people assemble for work here, to earn a bit— well, to dig round the trees and tie up the vines, and do the watering.... It's a bit of extra money for a poor man."

"I'm not talking to you," the officer snapped. "I'm talking to the tenant."

"I don't see that we have anything to discuss," said Vasily Petrovich. "As for your assertion that some kind of banned pamphlets are read here and all the rest of it, that is simply a figment of your diseased imagination, nothing more."

"Then why do you assemble these people here at night?" asked the officer wearily—he had realized long ago that the raid was a failure, because nothing could be proved.

"They 'assemble,'" said Vasily Petrovich with a delicately ironical emphasis on the word, "because with your kind permission I read lectures to them."

"Aha, lectures?" The officer pricked up his ears.

"Yes," Vasily Petrovich said, straightening his pince-nez. "Popular educational lectures on the history of civilization, literature and astronomy—following the programme authorized by the Ministry of Education. Have you any objections?"

"Astronomy." The officer shook his head disapprovingly and wrinkled his fleshy nose. "Of course, if you follow the authorized programme, then it's all right, you can go on."

"Ah, so you permit it?" cried Vasily Petrovich in mock delight. "You permit it! How very condescending! Well then—in that case I will not venture to detain you any longer. Or perhaps you would like to make a search— confiscation—or whatever you call it? In that case, be so kind. The orchard is at your disposal!" exclaimed Vasily Petrovich ceremoniously with a broad, hospitable gesture of both arms as though wishing to embrace all this wonderful night with its dark trees, camp-fire, glow-worms and starry sky.

"Dad's grand!" thought Petya, his eyes fixed admiringly on his father. At that moment there was the rustle of skirts and Auntie came running out.

"What's this? What's this? What's going on here?" she panted, turning alarmed eyes on the officer and the policemen.

"Don't get excited, it's nothing dreadful," said Vasily Petrovich calmly. "This gentleman had been given false information—that some kind of illegal

assemblages took place here, but fortunately it all turned out to be a mistake."

"Aha, I understand," said Auntie. "That's probably Madame Storozhenko's doing."

"I can tell you nothing about that, madame," said the officer, and after whispering to Moustache, he gestured angrily to the policemen. These shuffled about a little, then moved away through the orchard in single file like geese, their white tunics adding to the resemblance in the darkness. Soon they disappeared through the gate.

"As for those lectures of yours, I shall have to report them to my superiors," the officer said.

"To the Governor himself if you like," replied Vasily Petrovich and without waiting for them to leave, he lay down by the fire and said in his ringing teacher's voice,

"Well, gentlemen, let us continue. Last time I acquainted you with the elementary foundations of astronomy, the wonderful science of the stars. Let me repeat briefly what I told you. Astronomy is one of the most ancient sciences of mankind. The Egyptians...."

Petya slipped cautiously out of the circle of fire-light, slung the shot-gun over his shoulder and followed the police, hugging the shadows of the trees. As he came up level with the officer and Moustache he heard the officer saying angrily, "With agents like you, I might as well sit down on the stove and wait for my belly to boil." "But I swear I had the most reliable information!"

"Oh, go to hell. Madame Storozhenko greased your palm handsomely and you went and made fools of us. Coming out here for nothing on a Saturday night. Thank heaven there's the electric tram now, or we'd have had to rattle back on that horse-tram!"

STARS

So they were leaving. But Petya felt he must see them on the tram with his own eyes. Then he went back. On the road he saw a small, motionless figure. It was Motya.

"What are you doing here?" he asked sternly.

"Waiting," she whispered. "I was so worried about you...."

"Nobody asked you to," he said. "Go home."

"Have they left?"

"Yes."

"On the electric tram?"

"Yes."

Motya laughed softly.

"What's so funny?"

"It's queer—you and I alone in the empty field, and the night all round.... Petya," she said after a pause, "weren't you frightened when you followed them?"

"Silly! What about the gun?"

"Yes, that's right." Motya sighed. "But I nearly died of fear."

The night was dark and warm, with a slight breeze. Now and then a faint report like a shot came from Arcadia, where fireworks were being let off. A number of rockets soared into the air, glowing orange, and burst in great fiery stars that floated slowly down, and then their dry cracks came to Petya and Motya.

"How lovely!" said Motya and sighed again.

"Go home," was all Petya answered.

She turned and went obediently down the road, and soon disappeared in the dim silvery light.

Petya turned into the steppe and ran to the familiar gully. Nobody had told him to see the police safely away, and nobody had told him to go to Rodion Zhukov afterwards. He was impelled by an unconscious but sure inner urge. It was as though some force moved him.

It was quite warm in the gully. Rustling through the weeds, Petya felt his way along the steep rocky side, seeking the opening.

"Is that you, Petya?" Gavrik's voice asked out of the darkness.

"Yes, it's me."

"What's happening?"

"Everything's all right. They've gone."

"And not taken anyone?"

"No, no one."

"That's good. Here, reach out your hand."

Petya did so, and Gavrik pulled him into the cave. For some time they moved ahead in complete darkness, their shoulders now and then touching the wall, bringing down trickles of dry soil. Then the passage-way became lower and narrower so that they had to crawl on all fours. At last a faint light appeared, the passage widened, and Petya found himself in a large cave hewn out in the rock, with a sloping, smoke-blackened roof.

A lantern hanging on the wall cast a light, crisscrossed by the shadows of its bars, so that the cave looked like a cage. It was damp and cool, yet stuffy. The lack of fresh air was very noticeable. In the corner beneath the lamp Petya saw a small flat printing-press and guessed this was the one brought in the boxes he had seen. In a case alongside lay the type which Gavrik had been bringing from the *Odessa Leaflet* print-shop for two years. On the wall hung his familiar blue overalls stained with printer's ink.

Rodion Zhukov w-as sitting on the floor his back against the wall, smoking his pipe and reading a book, making pencil notes in the margin. The Pavlovskayas were settled on the boxes in which the press had come. The mother sat with her old waterproof drawn round her, and Marina was asleep, her head with its black hair-ribbon resting on her mother's knees, her feet in their dusty little buttoned shoes, one worn through at the toe, tucked under her.

All of their belongings lay on the floor beside them— the kerosene stove wrapped in newspaper, the bundle and the small travelling-bag, which led to the conclusion that they always had their things packed. They looked like people sitting in some small, out-of-the-way railway station waiting for a train.

"It's all right. We can go back," said Gavrik.

Rodion Zhukov did not move, but made Petya tell him everything. Then he thought a little and asked Petya to tell him again, without hurrying. Only after Petya had given his story for the second time did Zhukov slip his book into his pocket, rise, stretch luxuriously and say, "Well, we can go up again, then. Evidently it was just chance the bastards happened upon me. Come along, Tamara."

"Get up, dear," said Pavlovskaya, lightly nipping Marina's nose as one does with a little child. The girl opened her eyes, looked round about, saw Petya—earth-stained, tousle-headed, with the shot-gun over his shoulder—smiled sleepily and smoothed her creased hair-ribbon.

"I want to sleep," she said pettishly, but rose obediently and picked up the kerosene stove.

"No, leave your things here, just in case," said Rodion Zhukov.

"What a darling she is," thought Petya.

When they came out into the fresh air, the stars seemed wonderfully bright, almost blinding. The steppe was very quiet. Silently, stopping now and then to listen, they went back to the orchard, climbed over the earthen weed-grown bank and seated themselves quietly at the fire where Vasily Petrovich was still lecturing on astronomy.

"Just try to imagine," he said enthusiastically, raising his head to look at the sky, "that we have the magic power to travel through space with the speed of light. If that were so, we could easily convince ourselves that the universe is infinite. Look at that starry sky which arches so magnificently over us. What do

we see? We see myriads of stars, planets, and nebulae, and finally we see the Milky Way which in turn is nothing other than another great collection of stars. But all this countless number is only an infinitesimal part of the universe. So, gentlemen, imagine that we are flying through space with a speed inconceivable to the human mind and finally reach the most distant star. What do we find? We find that we see before us another star-filled firmament. We fly to the farthest star of this new sky but here too there is no end to the universe. Again a sky full of stars opens before us. And thus, however far we fly through space, more and more worlds open before us, and there is no end lo it because the universe itself is endless."

Vasily Petrovich fell silent, still looking upwards. And all the others looked silently up too—at the familiar stars, the silvery track of the Milky Way, thrilled, fascinated by the thought of infinity.

Marina was sitting beside Petya, looking up too; and suddenly he was swept with a wave of such tenderness, such aching love that tears rose in his eyes.

"Listen—" he whispered, gently touching her sleeve.

"What?" she said almost soundlessly, without turning her head.

The words "I love you" nearly slipped out, but instead he managed to say, "It is marvellous, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Marina, with a movement of her head that seemed wonderfully free and graceful. "The darker the night, the brighter the stars."

Somewhere far away a cock crowed, barely audible; and the slender blue finger of light from the new Bolshoi Fontan lighthouse rose far up, into the star-filled sky.

Printed in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics